

DESPARD THE SPORTSMAN



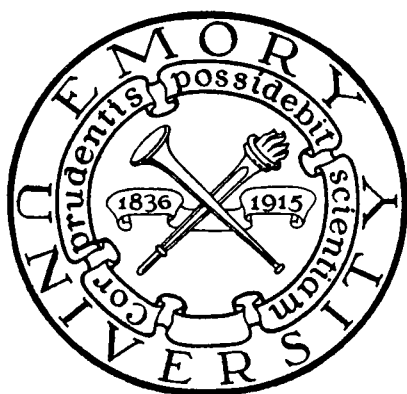
BY

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DESPARD,
THE SPORTSMAN

AND OTHER TALES.

BY
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LONDON:
MILES & MILES,
FORESTERS' HALL PLACE, CLERKENWELL ROAD.

DESPARD, THE SPORTSMAN.

CHAPTER I.

A CITY OF DUELLISTS.

AMONG the cities of America, New Orleans enjoys a special reputation. The important position it holds as the key to the great valley of the Mississippi, of whose commerce it is the natural *entrepôt* as well as *décharge*—its late rapid growth and aggrandizement—all combine to render the “Crescent City” one of the most interesting places in the world, and by far the most interesting in the United States.

A variety of other circumstances have contributed to invest New Orleans with a peculiar character in the eyes of the American people. The romantic history of its early settlement—the sub-tropical stamp of its vegetation, and the truly tropical character of its climate—the repeated changing of its early owners; the influx and commingling of the most varied and opposite nationalities; and the *bizarrerie* of manners and customs resulting therefrom, could not otherwise than produce a community of a peculiar kind.

And such has been the result. Go where you will throughout the Atlantic states, or even through the states

of the West, you will find a certain sentiment of interest attached to the name of the "Crescent City ;" and no one talks of it with indifference. The young Kentuckian, who has not yet been "down the river," looks forward with pleasant anticipation to the hour, when he may indulge in a visit to that place of infinite luxury and pleasure—the Mecca of the Western world.

The growth of New Orleans has been rapid, almost beyond parallel—that is, dating from the day it became a republican city. Up to that time its history is scarcely worth recording.

Sixty years have witnessed its increase from a village of 10,000—of little trade and less importance—to a grand commercial city, numbering a population of 200,000 souls. And this in the teeth of a pestilential epidemic, that annually robs it of its thousands of inhabitants.

But for the drawback of climate, New Orleans would, ere this, have rivalled New York ; but it looks forward to a still grander future. Its people believe it destined to become the metropolis of the world ; and in view of its peculiar position, there is no great presumption in the prophecy.

New Orleans is not looked upon as a provincial city—it never was one. It is a true metropolis, and ever has been, from the time when it was the head-quarters and commercial depôt of the gulf pirates, to the present hour.

Its manners and customs are its own ; its fashions are original, or, if borrowed, it is from the Boulevards, not from Broadway. The latest *coiffure* of a Parisian belle, the cut of a coat, or the shape of a hat, will make its appearance upon the streets of New Orleans, earlier than on those of New York—notwithstanding the advantage which the latter has in Atlantic steamers : and, what is more, the

coat and hat of the New Orleans will be of better fabric, and costlier materials, than that of the New Yorker. The Creole cares little for expense: he clothes himself in the best—the finest linen that loom can produce; the finest cloth that can be fabricated. Hats are worn costing twenty-five dollars apiece; and the bills of a tailor of the Rue Royale would astonish even a customer of Stultz. I have myself some recollection of a twelve guinea coat, made me by one of these Transatlantic artists; but I remember also that *it was a coat*.

New Orleans, then, may fairly claim to be considered a metropolis; and, among its many titles there is one which it enjoys *par excellence*, that is, in being the head-quarters of the *duello*. In no other part of America, nor haply in the world either, are there so many personal encounters—nowhere is the sword so often drawn, or the pistol aimed, in single combat, as among the fiery spirits of the “Crescent City.” Scarcely a week passes without an “affair;” and too often, through the sombre forest of Pontchartrain, borne upon the still morning air, may be heard the quick responsive detonations that betoken a hostile meeting—perhaps the last moments of some noble but misguided youth.

I have said that nearly every week witnesses such a scene—I am writing of the present. Were I to speak of the past, I should have to make a slight alteration in my phraseology. Were I to use the phrase, “nearly every day,” it would not invalidate the truth of my assertion; and that of a period not yet twenty years gone by.

At that time a duel, or a street fight—one or the other—was a diurnal occurrence: and the notoriety of either ended almost with the hour in which it came off.

It was difficult for a man of spirit to keep his hand clear of these embroglios; and even elderly respectable

men—men, married and with grown-up families—were not exempted from duelling, but were expected to turn out and fight, if but the slightest insult were offered them.

Of course a stranger, ignorant of the customs of the place, and used to a society where a little liberal “larking” was allowed, would there soon be cured of his propensity for practical jokes.

But even a sober-minded individual could not always steer himself so as to escape an adventure. For myself, without being at all of a pugnacious disposition, I came very nigh tumbling into an “affair” within twenty-four hours after my first landing in New Orleans ; and a friend, who was my companion, actually *did* take the field.

The circumstance is scarcely worth relating—and, perhaps, it would be better, both for my friend and myself, if it were left untold.

But there is a dramatic necessity in the revelation. The incident introduced me to the principal characters of the little drama I have essayed to set forth ; and the circumstances of this introduction—odd though they were—are required to elucidate the “situation.”

I love the sea, but hate sea-travelling. I never “go down to it in ships” but with great reluctance, and from sheer necessity. My fellow-voyager felt exactly as I did—both of us were alike weary of the sea. What was our joy, then, when, after a voyage ranging nearly from pole to equator—after being “cabined, cribbed, and confined” for a period of three months—buffeted by billows, and broiled amid long-continued calms—we beheld the promised land around the mouths of the mighty Mississippi !

The dove that escaped from the Ark was not more eager to set its claws upon a branch, than we to plant our feet upon *terra firma*

The treeless waste did not terrify us. Swamp as it was, and is, we should have preferred landing in its midst to staying longer aboard, had a boat been at our service.

As there was none, we were compelled to endure the tedious up-stream navigation of one hundred miles, before our eyes finally rested upon the shining cupola of the St. Charles.

Then we could endure the ship no longer ; and our importunities having produced their effects upon the kindly old skipper, two stout tars were ordered into the gig, and myself and companion were rapidly "shot" upon the bank.

It is not easy to describe the pleasurable sensations one has at such a moment ; but if you can fancy how a bird might feel on escaping from its cage, you may have a very good idea of how we felt on getting clear of our ship.

We were still several miles below New Orleans ; but a wide road wended in the direction of the city, running along the crest of a great embankment, known as the "Levee," and taking this road for our guide, we started forward towards the town.

CHAPTER II.

SCENE IN A DRINKING SALOON.

We passed plantations of sugar-cane, and admired the houses in which their owners dwelt—handsome villas, embowered amid orange groves, and shaded with Persian lilacs and magnolias.

We might have entertained the desire to enter one or other of these luxuriant retreats but, under the circum-

stances, there was neither hope nor prospect, and we continued on.

As we advanced up the road, other houses were encountered—some of a less inhospitable character. These were *cubarets* and *cafés*, that, with their coloured bottles and sparkling glasses, their open fronts and cool shaded corridors, were too tempting to be passed.

There was a sweetness about these novel potations of “claret sangarees” and “juleps,” fragrant with the smell of mint and pines—an attractive aroma—that could not be repelled, especially by one escaping from the stench of raw rum and ship’s bilge water.

Neither my companion nor I had the strength to resist their seductive influence ; and, giving way to it, we called at more than one *cabaret*, and tasted of more than one strange mixture. In fine, we became merry.

The sun was already low when we landed ; and before we had entered the suburbs of the city, his disc had disappeared behind the dark belt of cypress forest that bounds the western horizon.

The street lamps were alight, glimmering but dimly, and at long intervals from each other ; but a little afterwards a light glistened in our eyes more brilliant and attractive.

Through a large open folding-door was disclosed the interior of one of those magnificent drinking “saloons,” for which the “Crescent City” is so celebrated. The sheen of a thousand sparkling objects—of glasses, bottles, and mirrors ranged around the walls—produced an effect gorgeous and dazzling. To our eyes it appeared the interior of an enchanted palace—a cave of Aladdin.

We were just in the mood to explore it ; and, without further ado, we stepped across the threshold ; and approach-

ing the "bar," over a snow-white sanded floor, we demanded a brace of fresh juleps.

What followed I do not pretend to detail, with any degree of exactness. I have a confused remembrance of drinking in the midst of a crowd of men—most of them bearded, and of foreign aspect. The language was that of Babel, in which French predominated; and the varied costumes betokened a miscellaneous convention of different trades and professions. Numbers of them had the "cut" and air of sea-faring men—skippers of merchant vessels—while others were landsmen, traders, or small planters; and not a few were richly and fashionably dressed as gentlemen—real or counterfeit, I could not tell which.

My companion—a jolly young Hibernian—like myself, just escaped from the cloisters of *Alma Mater*, soon got *en rapport* with these strangers. Hospitable fellows they appeared; and in the twinkling of an eye we were drinking and clinking glasses, as if we had fallen among a batch of old friends or playmates!

There was one individual who attracted my notice. This may have arisen partly from the fact that he was more assiduous in his attentions to us than any of the rest; but there was also something distinctive in the style of the man.

He was a young man, apparently about twenty years of age, but with all the *ton* and air of a person of thirty—a precocity to be attributed partly to clime, and partly to the habitudes of New Orleans life. He was of medium size; with regular features, well and sharply outlined; his complexion was brunette, with an olive tinge; and his hair black, luxuriant, and wavy. His mustaches were dark and well defined, slightly curling at the tips. He was handsome, until you met the glance of his eye. In that there

was something repellent ; though why, it would be difficult to say. The expression was cold and animal. A slight scar along the prominence of his cheek was noticeable ; and might have been received in an encounter with rapiers, or from the blade of a knife.

This young man was elegantly attired. His dress consisted of a claret-coloured dress-coat, of finest cloth, with gilt buttons, and satin-lined skirts—a vest of spotless *Marseilles*—black inexpressibles—white linen *bootees*—and a Paris hat. A shirt ruffled with finest cambric, both at the bosom and sleeves, completed his costume.

To-day, and in the streets of London, this would appear the costume of a snob. Not so there and then. The dress described, with slight variations as to cut and colour, was the usual morning habit of a New Orleans gentleman—that is, his winter habit. In summer, white linen, or “nankeen” upon his body, and the costly “Panama” on his head.

I have been particular in describing this young fellow, as I afterwards ascertained that he was the type of a class which at that time abounded in New Orleans—most of them of French or Spanish origin—the descendants of the ruined planters of Haiti ; or a later importation—the sons of the refugees whom revolution had expelled from Mexico and South America.

Of these the “Crescent City” contained a legion—most of them being without visible means—too lazy to work, too proud to beg—dashing adventurers, who, in elegant attire, appeared around the tables of “Craps” and “Kino ;” in the grand hotels and exchanges ; at the public balls ; and not unfrequently in the best private company—for, at this time, the “society” of the “Crescent City” was far from being scrupulous or exacting. So

long as a gentleman's cloth and cambric were *en regle*, no one speculated as to whether his tailor was contented, or his *blanchisseuse* had given him a discharge for her little account.

The New Orleans pride themselves on minding their own affairs; and indeed there is some justice in their claim. Moreover, the rôle of the meddler is not without danger among these people; and even the half-proscribed adventurers of whom I have spoken, though not disdaining to live by *cards*, were ever ready to exchange one with the man who would cast the slightest slur upon their respectability.

Of just such a "kidney" was the individual we had met; though, of course, at that first interview, I was not aware of it. I was then little skilled in reading character from the physiognomy, and yet I remember that the glance of this young fellow, notwithstanding his polite attentions, produced an unpleasant impression upon me; and some instinct whispered to me that, despite his elegant attire and fine bearing, our new acquaintance *was not exactly a gentleman*.

My companion seemed more pleased with him than I was. I confess, however, that he had drunk deeper, and was far less capable of forming a judgment. As I turned away to converse with another of the strangers, I noticed the two—the Hibernian and the Frenchman—standing close together, champagne glasses in hand, and *hoobnobbing* in the most fraternal manner.

Ten minutes might have elapsed before I faced round again. When I did so, it was in consequence of some loud words that were uttered behind me, and in which I recognized the voice of my friend, speaking in an angry and excited tone. The words were:—

"Yes, sir ! it's gone—and, by Jaysus, *you* took it !"

"Pardon, Monsieur !"

"Pardon, indeed !—you've got my watch—you've *stolen* it, sir !"

Almost simultaneously with this unexpected accusation, I heard a loud, fierce "*sacr-r-ré*" from the Frenchman, followed instantly by a sharp metallic click, as of a pistol being cocked ; and as soon as I could get my eyes fairly upon the disputing parties, I beheld a somewhat frightful *tableau*.

My friend was standing close to the bar, pointing with one hand to the broken guard of his watch, which dangled loosely over the lappels of his waistcoat. His face was towards me, and from his gestures, as well as from the words he had uttered, I could see that some one had made free with his chronometer, and that he believed the thief to be the *elegant* already described.

The latter was between me and the Hibernian, and, as he stood facing his accuser, I could as yet see only his back.

But the suspicious "click" I had heard, caused me to step hastily to one side ; and this brought me in sight of the ugly weapon poised in the fellow's hand, with its muzzle pointed directly at the head of my fellow-voyager, who, seemingly taken by surprise, was making no effort to get out of the way !

All this had passed within a second of time.

Impelled by a sort of instinct, I sprang forward and clutched the pistol around the lock.

Whether I saved the life of my friend by so doing, I cannot say ; but the shot was not delivered ; and in the subsequent struggle between myself and the stranger, for possession of the pistol, the cap was wrenched off, and the weapon remained in my hands.

Seeing it was harmless, I returned it to its owner, with a word of caution to him not to be so ready in drawing such dangerous weapons in the middle of a crowd.

"*Sacré !*" shouted he, addressing himself more particularly to my fellow-voyager ; "you shall repent this insult — *sacr-r-ré !*"

"Insult, indeed !" stammered out the Hibernian—whom, as he would not desire his real name to be known, I shall call Casey. "I repeat it, then, my fine fellow ! My watch is gone—it was taken from my fob here : you see *this*, gentlemen ?" and Casey exhibited to the crowd the wrenched swivel. "It was he who did it : I repeat that he is the thief !"

The Frenchman fairly foamed with rage at this fresh accusation ; while, by his gestures, he appeared as if desirous of recapping the pistol.

I watched him closely, however, to prevent such a movement, as I knew that Casey was in no condition to defend himself.

At the same time I endeavoured, along with several others, to bring the affair to an explanation, and, if possible, to a pacific termination.

CHAPTER III.

A GENERAL SEARCH ALL ROUND.

My first belief was that Casey was labouring under an erroneous impression. That some one had robbed him of his watch was clear enough ; but there were several persons around him—some of them far more suspicious-looking characters than the accused.

Moreover, the elegant style of the man, and the indignant warmth he had displayed, seemed, to some extent, to attest his innocence.

My belief, then, was that Casey had pitched upon the wrong man; and I appealed to him to withdraw the charge, and acknowledge his error.

To my surprise he would do neither the one nor the other; and, notwithstanding the half-maudlin state he was in, there was an earnestness in his manner, and an unwavering pertinacity in his accusation, that led me to think he was not acting upon mere suspicion, but had *seen something*.

The noise and confusion, however, for the time prevented any explanation from being heard upon either side.

A voice arose above the din, calling out for the doors to be closed.

This was followed by a proposal that every one present should submit to be searched.

"Let there be a general search all round!" demanded several voices.

I recognized the man who was foremost in this demand—it was the mate of our own ship, who had dropped in along with several old sea-wolves like himself—for the vessel had been warped up, and was now lying at an adjacent wharf.

"Yes," responded several voices; "a search, a search! let us see who is the thief!"

No one objected—no one could—for each person present had a personal interest in the result; and, as no one was likely now to go out, the shutting of the doors was ruled as unnecessary.

Two men were immediately chosen as "searchers"—one of whom was our mate himself—the other the keeper of

the saloon ; and, without loss of time, the search proceeded.

It was altogether an odd spectacle, to see the two inquirers pass from individual to individual—stopping before each one in turn, handling him about the breast and back, and stripping him down the arms, legs, and thighs, as if they were a brace of electro-biologists, putting the whole company into a mesmeric slumber.

There was a good deal of merriment, and now and then loud bursts of laughter, as some character well known to the company interrupted the silence with a *jeu d'esprit*. For all this, there was a certain solemnity about the proceeding—a sort of painful anticipation that some one would prove the criminal.

During all this time the accused maintained a moody silence—addressing only a short phrase or two to some of his own friends, who had clustered around him. His look betokened confidence ; and but for a side-whisper which I had heard from Casey, I should certainly have continued under the impression that the gentleman was innocent. This whisper, however, staggered my faith : for it was a simple and earnest declaration that he, Casey, had seen the watch in the fellow's hand.

“Surely you must be mistaken—it might have been some other hand !”

“Not a bit of it !—I noticed the ruffles as the watch disappeared under them.”

“Remember, Casey, you're not very clear-sighted at this moment : think what you've been taking——”

“Bah ! I'm not blind for all that ; and I tell you, the loss of my twenty guinea repeater has made me as sober as a judge, my boy. I hope, however, it is not gone yet—we'll soon see.”

"You'll never see your watch again," said I. "The fellow hasn't got it—I can tell by his looks."

My conjecture proved correct. The young Frenchman was searched in common with the others. He made no objection—he could make none—and, to do the old sea-wolf justice, he performed his duty with elaborate exactness. He was no lover of Creole dandyism ; and I verily believe he would have chuckled with delight, to have found the stolen property on the person of the exquisite.

It was not so to be, however : the watch was not there, and the Frenchman smiled triumphantly at the termination of the search.

Others were now examined, until all had had their turn. No watch !

All present were declared innocent men—the watch was not in the room !

This result had been prophesied long before, and I expected it myself. It was easily explained. Beyond doubt Casey had lost his watch, by a thief, and inside the saloon ; but several persons had been observed to go out about the time he discovered his loss, or rather at the moment when he declared the accusation. One of these must have been the thief—that was the verdict of the company. More likely one of them had been the *receiver*.

Casey was a little crest-fallen, and the regards of the company were not favourable to him. This, however, only referred to the Creoles and Frenchmen. The honest seafaring fellows rather sympathized with him. They saw he had sustained a loss ; and they were well enough acquainted with New Orleans life, to know that the man who did the deed was probably still in the room.

Casey obstinately clung to his original statement ; but of course no longer urged it publicly—only *sotto voce* to our

mate, and one or two others, who, with myself, were counselling him to apologize.

Our whispering conversation was interrupted by the approach of the young Frenchman. There was a certain resolve in his look, that bespoke some determination—evidently the affair was not over.

As he drew near, way was made for him, and he stood confronting Casey.

“Now, Monsieur, do you apologize?”

Several cried “Yes,” by way of urging Casey to an affirmative.

“No,” said he, firmly and emphatically—“never! I stand to what I said. You took my watch—you *stole* it.”

“Liar!” cried the once more infuriated Frenchman, and both at the same instant sprang towards each other.

Fortunately, neither was armed—except with the weapons which nature had provided—and a short game of “fisticuffs”—in which Casey had decidedly the advantage—served as a ‘scape valve for the ebullition of their anger.

I might have dreaded the re-drawing of the pistol; but, during the whole interval, the mate and I, to whom I had given a hint, had kept our eyes upon the owner of it, and hindered him from rendering it available.

The combatants were soon separated; and after that commenced the more formal ceremony of the exchange of “cards.”

Casey gave his address, “St. Charles Hotel”—whither we were bound, and towards which we had been steering when “brought to” by the gleaming lights of the *café*.

The Frenchman’s card was taken in return; and, after a parting glass with the honest mate, and his two or three

confrères, we sallied forth from the saloon ; traversed the long narrow streets of the First Municipality, and a little before midnight we arrived at that magnificent *caravanseraï* known as the St. Charles Hotel.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXCHANGE OF CARDS.

M. JACQUES DE-PARD,

9, *Rue Dauphin.*

SUCH was the little memento that met my eyes as I entered Casey's sleeping apartment, at an early hour in the morning. It lay upon his dressing-table—a sorry substitute for the “twenty guinea repeater” that should have been found there.

My friend was still in the land of dreams. I was loth to awake him to the unpleasant reality which that tiny piece of pasteboard would naturally suggest ; for, besides being in itself a symbol of grave import, it would be certain to recall to poor Casey the remembrance of his loss, to whom, being no Cræsus, it was a serious one.

In reality he so regarded it ; and, when awakened at length, and conscious of what had transpired on the preceding night, he expressed far more concern about the loss he had sustained, than about the expected encounter. The latter he treated as a ridiculous joke—laughing at it as he pitched the card upon the floor.

“Stay !” said he, picking it up, and carefully placing it

in his pocket-book. "It *might* be the fellow's real name and address. If so, it will enable me to find him again; and, by Jaysus, I'll have that watch, or take the worth of it out of his hide. Hang it, man!—it's a family piece—got our crest on it—has been in the family ever since repeaters came into fashion. Yes, I'll take the worth of it out of his hide! But that's not possible—the whole of his yellow skin isn't worth that watch!"

And so talked Casey, while he performed his toilet as coolly as if he were dressing for a dinner party, instead of preparing himself for what might prove a deadly encounter.

Pistols we had decided it should be. Casey, expecting to be the challenged party, would, of course, be entitled to the choice of weapons. Had it been otherwise, my friend would have been in a bit of a dilemma; for, as he assured me, he had never taken a fencing lesson in his life; and it is notorious that the Creoles of New Orleans are skilled in the use of the small-sword. Some friendly strangers, after the exchange of cards on the preceding night, had made us aware of this fact, at the same time warning us that Casey's intended antagonist, whom they knew, was a noted swordsman. Swords, then, were not to be thought of.

Of course, as the party to be challenged, our duty was to stay at home (at the Hotel) until we should hear from the challenger. For my part, I did not anticipate there would be much delay; and I gave orders for a hurried breakfast.

"Faith! you may take your time about it," said Casey to the retiring waiter. "There's no need to spoil the meal. Never fear—we'll eat our breakfast without being interrupted."

"Nonsense! the friend of M. Despard will be here in ten minutes."

"No—nor in ten hours nayther. You'll ate your dinner without seeing either Misther Despard or his friend."

"Why do you think so?"

"Bah!—Is it a thief send a challenge to a gentleman? All blarney and brag! I tell you the fellow's a thief—he has got my watch, bad luck to him!—and he thinks the givin of the card a ready way to get out of the scrape: that's the maning of it. We'll never set eyes on him again, barrin' we go after him."

I was at first disposed to ridicule this logic; but, as time passed, I began to think there was some truth in it. We waited for breakfast being prepared, and then ate it in the most leisurely manner. As Casey had predicted, no one interrupted us at the meal; no visitor was announced—no card came in. I had already given rigorous orders to the clerk of the Hotel to forward any application on the instant.

The hour of ten arrived, but no communication from "M. Jacques Despard."

"Perhaps he is hunting up a friend?" I suggested. "We must give him time."

Eleven o'clock.

"Let's have a sherry cobbler!" proposed Casey; "we'll have plenty of time to drink it."

A couple of those magnificent "sherry cobbler," for which the St. Charles is world renowned, were immediately ordered up; and we passed the better half of an hour with the straw between our lips.

Twelve o'clock. Still no Despard—no friend—no challenge!

"I told you so," said Casey, not triumphant'y, but rather

in a tone of despondence. "This card's good for nothing," he continued, taking the piece of pasteboard from his pocket, and holding it up before his eyes; "a regular sham, I suspect, like the fellow himself—a false name and address—you see it's in pencil? Ah, mother o' Moses! I'll never see that watch again! Sure enough," continued he, after a pause, "the name's in print—he's gone to the expense of having that engraved, or somebody has for him, which is more likely.—No!—he won't come to time."

"We must remain at home till dinner. Perhaps they keep late hours here."

"Late or early, we won't see Misther Despard till we go after him; an' by gorra!" cried Casey, striking the table in a most violent manner, "that's what I mane to do. A man don't point a pistol at my head, without giving me a chance to return the compliment; and I'm bound to have another try for that watch."

From Casey's earnest speech and manner, I saw that he was resolved; and I knew enough of him to be aware that he was a man of strong resolution. Whether a challenge came or not, he was determined that the affair should not drop, till he had some kind of revenge upon Jacques Despard, or, if no such person existed, upon the "swell" who had stolen his repeater.

It certainly appeared as if the card *was* a sham: for the dinner hour came, and no one had acknowledged it.

We descended, and ate our dinner at the general *table d'hôte*—such a dinner as can be obtained only in the luxurious hostelry of the St. Charles.

We sat over our wine till eight o'clock; but although a few friends joined us at the table, we heard nothing of a hostile visitor. Under the influence of *Sillery* and *Moet*,

we for the time forgot the unpleasant incidents of the preceding night.

For my part, I should have been glad to have forgotten them altogether, or at all events to have left the matter where it stood; and such was the tenor of my counsels. But it proved of no avail: the fiery Hibernian was determined, as he expressed it, to have his "whack" out: he would either get back his watch or have a "pop" at the thief who stole it.

So resolved was he on carrying out his intention, that I saw it was idle to oppose him.

Certainly it was rather a singular affair; and now that a whole day had passed without any communication from M. Despard, I became more than half convinced that Casey was right, and that the exquisite really had committed the theft. It was his indignant repudiation of the charge that had misled me; but Casey's constant and earnest asseveration—now strengthened by the after circumstances of the false card, and the failure to make an appearance—satisfied me that we had been in the company of a sharper.

With this conviction I retired for the night, Casey warning me that he should be with me at an early hour in the morning, in order to devise what measures should be taken.

With regard to an early hour, he was too true to his promise. Before six—long before I felt inclined to leave my comfortable bed—he was with me.

He apologized for disturbing me so early, on the score of his being without a watch, and could not tell the time; but I could perceive that the jest was a melancholy one.

"What do you mean to do?"

"Why, to find Master Ruffleshirt, to be sure."

"Will you not give him an hour's grace? Perhaps he may send this morning?"

"No chance whatever."

"It is possible he may have lost your card? Leave it alone till we have had breakfast."

"Lost my card? No. Besides, he might easily have got over that difficulty. He knew we were on our way to this hotel. Don't all the world come here? No; that isn't the fellow's excuse, and I shan't eat till I know what is. So, rouse up, my boy! and come along."

"But where are you going?"

"Number noine, Rue Daw—daw—hang his scribble! Daw—phin, I believe."

I arose, and dressed myself with as little delay as possible.

Whilst making my toilette, Casey gave me a hurried sketch of how he intended to proceed. It amounted to little more than a declaration of his intention to make M. Jacques Despard disgorge the stolen property, or fight. In other words, Casey, believing himself to be in a lawless land (and his experience to some extent seemed to justify the belief), had determined upon taking the law into his own hands.

I saw that he no longer contemplated a duel with his light-fingered adversary. On the contrary, he talked only of "pitching into the fellow," and "taking the worth of his watch out of him." The angry feeling he exhibited convinced me that he meant what he said; and that the moment he should set eyes on the Frenchman, there would be a "row."

I saw that this would not do on any account, and for various reasons. M. Jacques Despard, if found at all, would, no doubt, be found to have a fresh cap on the

nipple of his pistol ; and to be present at a street fight, either as principal or backer, was not to my liking. I had no ambition, either of catching a stray bullet, or of being locked up in the New Orleans Calaboose ; and by yielding to Casey's wish I should be booked for one or the other.

Before completing my toilet, therefore, it occurred to me to suggest a slight change in Casey's programme—which was to the effect that he should stay where he was, and leave it to me to call at the address upon the card. If it should prove that M. Despard lived there, there would be no difficulty in finding him whenever we should want him. If the contrary, my going alone would be no great waste of time ; and we could afterwards adopt such measures as were necessary to bring him to terms.

This advice appeared reasonable, and Casey consented to follow it, charging me, as I left him, with the emphatic message—

“ Tell the fellow if he don't challenge *me*, I'll challenge *him*, by G—d !”

In five minutes afterwards, I was on my way with the card between my fingers, and walking rapidly towards the Rue Dauphin.

CHAPTER V.

M. LUIS DE HAUTEROCCAR.

FOLLOWING the directions, which I had taken from the hotel-porter, I kept down St. Charles Street, and crossing the Canal, I entered the Rue Royale into the French *quarter* or “municipality.”

I was informed that by keeping along the Rue Royale

for a half mile or so, I should find the Rue Dauphin leading out of it; and I had, therefore, nothing more to do than to walk directly onward, and look out for the names upon the corners of the streets.

Though it was day-light, the lamps were still faintly glimmering, their nightly allowance of oil not being quite exhausted. The shops and warehouses were yet closed; though here and there might be seen a cabaret or café, that had opened its trap-like doors to catch the early birds—small traders on their way to the great vegetable market—cotton-rollers in sky-blue linen inexpressibles, with their shining steel hooks laid jauntily along their hips; now and then a citizen—clerk or shopkeeper—hurrying along to his place of business. Only those of very early habits were abroad.

I had proceeded down the Rue Royale about a quarter of a mile, and was beginning to look out for the lettering on the corners of the cross streets, when my attention was drawn to an individual coming in the opposite direction. Though he was still at a considerable distance, and we were on different sides of the street, I fancied I recognized him. Each moment brought us nearer to one another; and as I had kept my eyes upon him from the first, I at length became satisfied of the identity of M. Jacques Despard.

“A fortunate encounter,” thought I. “It will save me the trouble of searching for No. 9, Rue Dauphin.”

The dress was different: it was a blue coat instead of a claret, and the ruffles were less conspicuously displayed; but the size, shape, and countenance were the same—as also the hair, moustache, and complexion. It must be my man.

Crossing diagonally, I placed myself on the banquette to

await the gentleman's approach. My position would have hindered him from passing; and the next moment he halted, and we stood face to face.

"*Bon jour, Monsieur!*" I began.

He made no answer, but stood with his eyes staring widely upon me, in which the expression was simply that of innocent surprise.

"Well counterfeited," thought I.

"You are early abroad," I continued. "May I ask, Monsieur, what business has brought him into the streets at such an hour of the morning?"

The thought had struck me that he might be on his way to the St. Charles, to make some inquiry; and I recalled my conjecture about his having mislaid Casey's card.

"What business, Monsieur, but that of my profession?" and as he made this reply, his dark eye flashed with a kindling indignation—which, of course, I regarded as counterfeit.

"Oh!" said I, in a sneering tone, "it appears that you pursue your profession at all hours. I thought the night was your favourite time. I should have fancied that at this hour you would scarcely have found victims."

"Fool! Who are you? What are you talking of? What means this rudeness?"

"Pooh—pooh! Monsieur Despard; you are not going to get off in that way. Your memory appears short. Perhaps this card will refresh it; or do you repudiate that also?"

"Card!—what card?"

"Look there!—perhaps you will deny having given it?"

"I know nothing of it, Monsieur; but you shall have *my card*; and for this insult I demand yours in return."

"It seems idle to make the exchange, after what has already passed."

Curiosity, however, prompted me. I was desirous of ascertaining whether his first address had been a false one, as Casey had suggested. Hastily scratching the address of the hotel, I handed him my card, taking his in return. To my astonishment I read:—

*"Luis De Hauteroche,
"16, Rue Royale."*

I should have been puzzled, but the solution was evident. The fellow was no doubt well provided with cards—kept a varied "pack" of them, and this was only another sham one.

I was determined, however, that I should not lose sight of him till I had fairly "treed" him.

"Is this your *real* address?" I inquired, with an incredulous expression.

"*Peste! Monsieur*, do you still continue your insults? But you shall give me full satisfaction. It is my professional address. See for yourself."

And as he said this he pointed to the door of a house, only a few yards from the spot where we were standing.

Among other names painted upon the panel I read:

*"M. Luis De Hauteroche,
"Avocat."*

"I can be found here at all hours," said he, passing me and stepping inside the doorway. "But you will not need to seek me, Monsieur. I promise it, my friend shall call upon you without delay."

The door closing behind him put an end to our "interview."

For some seconds I stood in a kind of "quandary." I could not doubt but that it was the same man whom we had met in the drinking saloon. The dress was different—of a more sober cut, though equally elegant—but this was nothing: it was a different hour, and that might account for the change of garments. The *tout ensemble* was the same—the features, complexion, colour of hair, curl and all.

And still I could not exactly identify the bearing of M. Jacques Despard with that of M. Luis De Hauteroche. The evil expression of eye which I had noticed formerly was not visible to-day; and certainly the behaviour of the young man on the present occasion, had been that of an innocent and insulted gentleman.

Was it possible I could have made a mistake, and had, in transatlantic phrase "waked up the wrong passenger?"

I began to feel misgivings. There was a simple means of satisfying myself—at least a probability of doing so. The Rue Dauphin could not be far off, and might soon be reached. If it should prove that M. Despard lived at No. 9, the mystery would be at an end.

I turned on my heel, and proceeded in the direction of the Rue Dauphin.

CHAPTER VI.

M. JACQUES DESPARD.

A HUNDRED yards brought me to the corner of this famous street, and twenty more to the front of No. 9—, a large crazy looking house, that had the appearance of a common hotel, or cheap boarding-house.

The door stood open, and I could see down a long dark hall. But there was no knocker. A brass-handled bell appeared to be the substitute, under which were the words—"Tirez la sonette."

I climbed the rickety steps and rang. A slatternly female—a mulatto—half asleep, came slipping along the hall; and, on reaching the door, drawled out:—

"Que voulez vous, Mosheu?"

"Does M. Despard live here?"

"Moss'r Despard? *Oui—oui.*"

"Will you have the goodness to say that a gentleman wishes a word with him?"

The girl had not time to reply, before a side door was heard creaking open, and a head and shoulders were protruded into the hall. They were those of a man.

Though the hair of the head was tossed and frowsy, and the shirt that covered the shoulders looked as if it had passed through the "beggar's mangle," I had no difficulty in recognizing the wearer. It was M. Despard—M. Despard *en deshabelle*.

The gentleman evidently regretted his imprudence, and would have withdrawn himself from view. The shirt and shoulders had already disappeared behind the screening of the lintel; but, before the head could be backed in, I had stepped over the threshold and "nailed him" to an interview.

"M. Despard, I believe?" was the interrogative style of my salutation.

"*Oui, M'sseu.* What is your business?"

"Rather a strange question for you to put, M. Despard. Perhaps you do not remember me?"

"Perfectly."

"And what occurred at our first interview?"

"Equally well—that you were accompanied by a drunken brute who calumniated me."

"It is not becoming to vilify a gentleman after he has given you his card. Of course you intend to challenge him?"

"Of course I intend nothing of the sort. *Parbleu!* *M'sseu*, I should have a busy time of it, were I to notice the babble of every drunken brawler. I can pardon the slang of sling drinkers."

I had discovered by this time that M. Despard spoke English as fluently as he did French, and also that he was perfectly versed in the slang epithets of our language.

"Come, Monsieur," said I, "this grandeur will not screen you. It shall be my duty to repeat your elegant phraseology to my friend, who I can promise will not pardon *you*."

"That don't signify."

"If you are not disposed to *send* a challenge, you will be compelled to *receive* one."

"Oh! that is different. I shall be most happy to accept it."

"It would save time if you give me the address of your second."

"Time enough after I have received the challenge."

"In two hours, then, I shall demand it."

"*Tres bien, M'sseu.*"

And with a stiff bow the *caput* of M. Despard disappeared into the dark doorway.

Turning away, I descended the creaking steps, and walked back along the Rue Dauphin.

On reaching the corner of Rue Royale, I paused to reflect. I had ample food for reflection—sufficient almost to bewilder me. Within ten minutes I had succeeded in

filling my hands with business enough to last me for the whole of that day and a portion of the next. The object of my halting, therefore, was that I might think over this business, and if possible arrange it into some kind of a definite programme.

An open cabaret close by offered an empty chair and a table. This invited me to enter; and, seating myself inside, I called for some claret and a cigar. These promised to lend a certain perspicuity to my thoughts, that would enable me to set my proceedings in some order.

My first thought was a feeling of regret at having promised M. Despard to call again. I knew that Casey would insist upon a meeting—all the more pertinaciously on hearing what had passed—and I was now more than ever convinced of the absurdity of such a step. What had he to gain by fighting with such a man? Certainly not his watch, and as certainly there was no credit to be derived from such an encounter. What I had just seen and heard, perfectly satisfied me that we were not dealing with a gentleman. The appearance of M. Despard in his morning *deshabille*—his vulgar behaviour and language—the *mise-en-scene* in the midst of which I had found him—and above all the nonchalant bravado with which he had treated Casey's serious charge against him—convinced me that the charge was true; and that instead of a gentleman we had to do with a *chevalier d'industrie*.

What, then, could Casey gain in measuring weapons with a character of this kind? Certainly nothing to his advantage.

On the other hand he might lose in the encounter, and in all probability he would.

A very painful reflection entered my mind as I dwelt upon this. If the fellow had designed it, he could not

have exhibited more skill in bringing circumstances about in his favour ; and only now did it occur to me the advantage we had given him. The positions of the parties had become entirely reversed. His adversary now held the citadel : Casey was to be the assailant. If the Frenchman intended to stand up—and under the altered circumstances it was likely he would—I feared for the result. He would have the right of choice ; the rapier would unquestionably be the weapon chosen ; and from the inexorable laws of the duello there would be no appeal.

As these considerations ran hurriedly through my mind, I began to feel sincerely anxious about the consequences ; and blamed myself for permitting my temper—a little frayed by the insulting language—to betray me into, what I now regarded as, a manifest imprudence. “*Facilis decensus averni, sed revocare gradum.*”

There was no retreating from the step I had taken. Casey's antagonist might be a gambler, a swindler, a suspected thief, but in New Orleans—more especially at the time of which I write—these titles would not rob him of the right to demand the treatment of a gentleman—that is, if he offered to fight as one.

We had gone too far. I knew that we were so compromised that we must carry the thing to an end.

I had but one hope ; and this was that Monsieur Despard might after all prove a *bavard*, and show the white feather.

I must confess, however, that this hope was a very faint one. If the fellow had impressed me with an idea of his vulgarity, he had said or done nothing that could lead me to question his courage.

Up to this time, the tumult of my thoughts had hindered me from dwelling upon my odd encounter with the young

avocat. Since it had only happened fifteen minutes before, of course, I had not forgotten it; and the affair of my friend being, in my mind, now arranged, it became necessary to attend to my own.

So ludicrous was the whole *contretemps*, that I could scarcely restrain laughter when I thought of it; but there was also a serious side to the question, calculated to prevent any free ebullition of mirth.

Already, perhaps, M. De Hauteroche's messenger was on his way to the St. Charles Hotel; and, on arriving there, I might find that besides having to play the easy *métier* of second in a duel, I should be called upon to enact the more serious *rôle* of a "principal."

Might find! there was no *might* in the matter. I was as certain of it as if I already carried the challenge in my pocket.

I could not help reflecting upon the very awkward dilemma, into which a moment of evil indulgence had plunged both my friend and myself, and upon the very threshold of new world life. It seemed that we were to be initiated into its mysteries by a baptism of blood!

I was less uneasy about my own affair. My chief source of regret was, my having given pain and offence to a young gentleman, who appeared to be one of delicate susceptibility. Certainly my strange behaviour must have astonished him, as much as the after finding of his counterpart, and the resemblance between them, astonished *me*.

The likeness was really remarkable—though less than it would have been, had M. Despard been in full toilette, as I had first viewed him. The scar upon his cheek, moreover, I now observed and remembered. Why had I not thought of it before?

With regard to my affair with M. De Hauteroche, the

course was simple and clear: an unqualified apology. I only hesitated as to the when and where to make it.

Should I go on to the hotel and meet his second? That would be a more ceremonious way of proceeding—the most *en regle*.

But the apology would require an explanation—the embroglio was curious and complicated—and the explanation could only be properly understood by giving the details *viva voce*.

I resolved, therefore, to waive all ceremony, and, trusting to the generosity of my accidental enemy, to return to him *in propria persona*.

Quaffing off my claret; and flinging away the stump of my cigar, I walked directly to No. 16, Rue Royale.

To my gratification I found the young *avocat* in his office; and I was further satisfied by perceiving that I was in good time. No message had yet been sent to the St. Charles—though I had no doubt that the military-looking gentleman whom I met in the office was upon the eve of such an errand. My appearance must have been as little expected as that of the “man in the moon.”

I shall not trouble the reader by detailing the apology. The explanation is known already. Suffice it to say, that when M. De Hauteroche heard it, he not only acted in the true spirit of a gentleman; but, from an enemy, became transformed into a friend. Perceiving that I was a stranger, he generously invited me to renew my visit; and, with a hearty laugh at the *outré* style of our introduction, we parted.

Casey's more serious affair was still upon my mind; and I hurried home to the hotel.

As I expected, Casey *would* send the challenge; and, as I almost confidently anticipated, the other *accepted* it.

It ended in a duel, and I need hardly add that swords were the weapons.

I refrain from giving a description of this duel, which differed only from about a million of others—minutely described by romance writers—in being one of the very shortest of combats. At the very first passage Casey received (and I esteemed it very fortunate that he did so) his adversary's sword through the muscles of his right arm—completely disabling him. That was all the satisfaction he ever got for the loss of his repeater!

Of course this rude thrust ended the combat; and M. Jacques Despard marched off the ground without a scratch upon his person or a blemish on his name.

Casey, however, still asserted—though, of course, not publicly—"that the fellow took the watch;" and I afterwards found good reason to believe that he *did* take it.

CHAPTER VII.

HOSPITABLE FRIENDS.

CASEY's views were commercial, and New Orleans was not the place where a display of spirit would be likely to damage his prospects. It appeared rather to have an opposite effect; for, before his arm was well out of the sling, I had the gratification to learn that he had received an appointment in one of the large cotton commission houses—a calling sufficiently suited to his temperament.

My own object in visiting the Western World was less definite. I was of that age when travel is attractive—young enough to afford a few years of *far niente* before entering upon the more serious pursuits of life. In short,

I had no object beyond idleness and sight-seeing ; and in either way, a month or two may be passed in New Orleans without much danger of suffering from *ennui*.

My stay in the "Crescent City" extended to a period of full three months. A pleasant hospitality induced me to prolong it beyond what I had originally intended : and the dispenser of this hospitality was no other than M. Luis De Hauteroche.

Notwithstanding the *bizarrierie* of its beginning, our acquaintance soon grew into friendship ; for the southern heart is of free and quick expansion, as the flowers of its clime, and its affection as rapidly ripens. There the friendship of a single month is often as strong—aye, and as lasting too—as that which results from years of intercourse under the cold ceremonies of old world life.

In a month De Hauteroche and I were bosom friends ; and scarcely a day passed that we did not see each other, scarcely three that we were not companions in some boating or hunting excursion—some *fête champêtre* among his Creole acquaintances, the hospitable planters of the "coast,"—at the *bal-masque*, or in the boxes of the "Theatre Français."

In the morning hours I often visited him at his place of business—for business he did not altogether neglect—in the Rue Royale ; but more frequently in the evening at his private residence—the pretty little "cabane," as he called it, with its glass door windows and vine-loaded verandahs, in the adjoining street of the Rue Bourgogne.

This charming spot had a peculiar attraction for me. Was it the company of De Hauteroche himself or that of Adele, his fair sister, that drew me so often thither ? It must have been one or the other—for excepting the dark-skinned domestics, the two were the only inmates of the

house. I relished much the conversation of my young Creole friend—perhaps still more, the music which his sister understood how to produce upon her harp and guitar. Especially did the notes of the harp vibrate pleasantly upon my ear; and the picture of a fair maiden seated in front of that noble stringed instrument, soon impressed itself on my spirit, whether awake or dreaming. Adele became the vision of my dreams.

Without designing it, I soon became acquainted with the family history of my new friends. It was but the natural consequence of the confidential intercourse that had sprung up between us.

They were the orphan children of an officer of the Napoleonic army—an *ancien-colonel* of artillery—who, after the defeat of Waterloo, surrendered up his sword and sought an asylum in the Far West. He was but one of many, who, at that time, deprived of the patronage of their great leader, became *émigrés* by a sort of voluntary exile, finding in the French settlements of the New World—Louisiana among the rest—a kindred and congenial home.

In the case of Hauteroche, however, the habits of the military man had not fitted him either for a commercial life or that of a planter. His affairs had not prospered—and at his death, which had occurred but the year before—he had left his children little other inheritance than that of an excellent education and a spotless name.

Far otherwise had it been with a comrade who accompanied him in his exile—a brother officer of his regiment and a devoted bosom friend. The latter preferring the cooler climate of St. Louis, had gone up the river and settled there.

He was a Norman, and his young wife had accompanied

him. With the stauncher qualities of this race, he had devoted himself to commercial pursuits; and his perseverance was rewarded by the acquirement of an ample fortune—which, with his wife—also of Norman family—and an only daughter, he was now enjoying in opulent retirement.

The almost fraternal friendship of the two ex-officers was not extinguished by their altered mode of life; but, on the contrary, it continued as warm as ever during the period of their residence in the New World. Annually the “crate” of oranges from the south was sent up to St. Louis, and as often was the barrel of apples or walnuts—the produce of the more temperate clime—despatched in the opposite direction—a pleasant interchange of presents effected by the medium of the mighty Mississippi.

A personal intercourse, too, was at intervals renewed. Every two or three years the old colonel had indulged himself with a ramble on the prairies which lie contiguous to the settlements of St. Louis, while his brother officer, at like intervals, reciprocated the visit by a trip to the great southern metropolis, thus in a very convenient manner combining the opportunities of business and pleasure.

Under these circumstances it was natural that the families of De Hauteroche and Dardonville should be affectionately attached to each other, and such was in reality the case. I was constantly hearing of the latter—of the goodness of Madame Dardonville—of the beauty of Olympe.

It was nearly three years since either De Hauteroche or his sister had seen their St. Louis friends. Olympe, as was alleged, was then but a child; but the fervour with which the young avocat descanted upon her merits, led me to suspect that in his eyes at least, she had reached a very

interesting period of her childhood. Now and then the merry badinage of his sister on this point, bringing the colour to his cheeks, confirmed me in the suspicion.

My new acquaintances had admitted me as a link into the chain of their happy circle ; and for three months I enjoyed, almost without interruption, its pleasant hospitality.

It became a spell that was hard to break ; and when the hour of leave-taking arrived, I looked upon it as a painful necessity—though my absence did not promise to be a prolonged one.

The necessity was one of sufficient urgency. A July sun was glaring from the sky, and the yellow spectre had entered the Crescent City, upon its annual visit of devastation.

Already had it begun its ghastly work, and here and there presented itself in horrid mien. In those Faubourgs where dwelt the less opulent of the population, I observed traces of its presence ; that symbol of terrible significance—the red cross upon the closed door—telling too plainly that the destroyer had been there.

It would have been madness for me to have remained amidst a pestilence, from which it was so easy to escape. Twenty hours upon a fast boat, and I should be clear of the danger : and among the up-river towns I might make choice of an asylum.

Four large cities—Pittsburg, Louisville, Cincinnati, and St. Louis—lay beyond the latitude of the epidemic : all easy of access. In any of these I might find a luxurious home ; but I longed to look upon those boundless fields of green, for years the idol of my youthful fancy ; and I knew that St. Louis was the gate that guided to them. Thither, then, was I bound.

With regret I parted from my Creole friends. They had no need to fly or fear the scourge. Acclimatized in the middle of that vast *marais*, its malaria had for them neither terror nor danger. Immunity from both was their birthright, and New Orleans was their home throughout the year: though during the months of intolerable heat and utter stagnation of business, it was their habit to reside in one of the numerous summer retreats found upon the shores of Lake Pontchartrain.

I was in hopes they would have accompanied me to St. Louis, and I endeavoured to induce them to do so.

Luis seemed desirous, and yet declined! I knew not the delicate reason that influenced him to this self-denial.

I promised to return with the first frost; for this usually kills "Yellow Jack."

"Ah! you will not be here so soon?" said Adele, in a tone that pretended to be pensive. "You will like St. Louis too well to leave it. Perhaps when you have seen Olympe——"

"And what of Olympe?"

"She is beautiful—she is rich——"

"Those are qualities that more concern your brother; and if I should make love to Olympe, it will only be as his proxy."

"Ha! ha! a perilous prospect for poor Luis!"

"Oh, no! Luis need fear no rival; but, jesting apart, I should be glad to enter into a little covenant with him."

"A covenant?"

"Yes—the terms of which would be, that in St. Louis I should use all my interest in his favour, while he should here reciprocate, by employing his in mine."

"In what quarter, Monsieur?"

"Here, at home."

Adele's dark brown eyes rolled upon me a moment, as if in innocent astonishment; and then, suddenly changing their expression, they danced and sparkled to a peal of merry laughter, which ended in the words:—

"Au revoir ! la première gelée, adieu ! adieu !"

Luis was outside, waiting to accompany me to the boat; and, returning the adieu somewhat confusedly, I hurried up the steps of the verandah, and joined him.

In another hour I was upon the broad bosom of the "Father of Waters," breasting his mighty current towards its far distant source.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VILLA DARDONVILLE.

Soon after my arrival in St. Louis, I called upon the Dardonvilles, and presented my letter of introduction. It was a sealed document, and I knew not the nature of its contents; but from the effect produced I must have been the bearer of strong credentials. It placed me at once on a footing of intimacy with the friends of my friends.

The family did not reside in town, but at the distance of a mile or so from it. Their villa stood upon a high bluff of the river, commanding a view of the broad noble stream, and beyond the wooded lowlands of Illinois, stretching like a sea of bluish green to the far eastern horizon.

Nothing could exceed the attractions of this transatlantic home; and the many visitors whom I met there, proved that they were appreciated. Dardonville, now rich, had retired from mercantile life, and offered a profuse hos-

pitality to his friends. Need I say that he had troops of them ?

From the character of much of the company that I met there, it was easy to see what was the chief object of attraction. It was not the wines, his luxurious dinners, nor the joys of the *fête champêtre*, that brought to the villa Dardonville so many of the choice youth of the neighbourhood—the sons of rich planters and merchants—the young officers of the near military post. There was an influence far more powerful than these—Olympe.

Olympe was an heiress—a beauty—a belle.

In truth she was a lovely creature—one of those blonde, golden-haired beings, that appear to bring earth and heaven together, uniting in soft sweet harmony the form of a woman with the spirit of an angel.

She was still only a girl ; but the precocity of that sunny clime promised the early development of her perfect form, already distinguished by charms of which she alone appeared unconscious.

It would have been no difficult matter to have fallen in love with Olympe—a far greater feat to have kept one's heart clear ; and I rather congratulated myself that mine was already occupied. Happy might be the man who should be honoured by the first passionate throbbings of that young virginal bosom ; but wretched he who should vainly aspire to that honour.

Perhaps it was my indifference that made me the favourite of Madame Dardonville ; or was there something in the letter of my Creole friend that introduced me to her confidence ? I knew not ; but from the hour of my arrival this good lady admitted me to the intimacy of a confidential friendship.

Through this confidence I soon became acquainted with

the conjugal destiny of the lovely Olympe—so far as that could be controlled by the will of her parents. Louis De Hauteroche needed no backer in me. Notwithstanding his numerous and richer rivals, there was not much to fear, with such influence in his favour. Above all, the heart of Olympe was still free. I rejoiced on learning this ; for seeing this fair young creature beset by so many suitors—too young to receive proposals—I trembled for the fate of my friend. Madame Dardonville, however, was a good “duenna ;” and as for the retired merchant and *ancien lieutenant*, he had no idea of any danger. It was his design, and had been for years, that Olympe should marry Luis de Hauteroche, the son of his old comrade and friend—the son of his early benefactor, as he declared to me in the warmth of his amical enthusiasm, when we were one day conversing on the subject.

“Yes,” exclaimed he, “De Hauteroche is poor—so was his father before him ; but De Hauteroche was a gentleman of noble race, Monsieur—a true gentleman—and Luis must be—how could it be otherwise ?”

I assured him it was my own belief ; and in answer to many a question put both by Monsieur and Madame, I found the opportunity of making some slight return for the many kindnesses of my Creole friend. Had I made the covenant with Adele, I could not have been more zealous in carrying out my share of its conditions.

Such was the position I held in the Dardonville family previous to my starting for the prairies.

My excursion extended to the country of the “Crows,” and occupied a period of over three months. I also had the honour of an interview with the redoubtable “Black-feet” and the good fortune not to leave my scalp in the hands of these Ishmaelites of the prairies. I do not here

intend to detail to my reader the incidents of my prairie life. They have no bearing upon our narrative. I need only remark, that during my three months' residence in the wilderness I had no communication whatever with the civilized world, and never heard from any of the friends I had left behind on either side of the Atlantic. On my return to St. Louis, therefore, I found many items of news awaiting me—one of the most unexpected being the death of M. Dardonville! Congestive fever, after a short illness, had carried him off—not much beyond the prime of life, and just when he had accomplished a position of opulent independence. This is not an uncommon fate with men who seek rest and retirement after a life of continued activity.

My intimacy with the family suffered no interruption from this melancholy occurrence, though of course its character was somewhat charged. But Madame Dardonville was as friendly as ever—even more so I fancied—and for the few weeks that I remained at St. Louis, she pressed me to accept almost a constant hospitality. General society was no longer received at the villa : only those friends whose intimacy was of long standing.

That I had won Madame Dardonville's confidence, must be attributed to my relations with M. Luis De Hauteroche ; and to the same, no doubt, was I indebted for a singular secret that was entrusted to me on the eve of my departure for New Orleans. It was to the effect that her husband had made a most curious will—by which one half of his estate was left to his widow, the other to his daughter. There was nothing remarkable about this partition of the property, and it appeared to me to be equitable enough : but it was in another point that the will was oddly conditioned. This was, that in the event of Luis De Haute-

roche offering to marry Olympe, the latter should not be free to refuse, except under forfeiture of the legacy left her by her father; and this was to become the property of Luis De Hauteroche himself! In other words, the daughter of Dardonville was left by legacy to the son of his old friend—on such conditions as were likely to lead her to their acceptance, while young De Hauteroche was comparatively free in his choice. This I was assured by Madame Dardonville was the fruits of a profound gratitude for some early favour, which her husband had received at the hands of his former comrade De Hauteroche.

I thought it a fortunate circumstance, that the parties interested in this strange document were not likely to offer any opposition to its terms and conditions. It would prove only an idle instrument, and perhaps in a few months the writing contained in it would be no longer of any significance. My friend Luis would inherit the property of the rich merchant, and marry his daughter to boot. That would be the end of it.

I was curious to know if De Hauteroche had not yet heard of the fortune thus strangely conditioned to him, and I asked the question. The reply was "Not yet." There were reasons why he had not been told of it. But there was no longer any object in keeping the secret from him, and the Madame informed me that she had just written to him, enclosing a copy of her husband's will, and giving him a full explanation of her views upon the subject.

This conversation occurred upon the day before my departure from St. Louis. Madame Dardonville had dispatched her letter by mail. She expressed regret at not having entrusted it to me, but she was not apprised of my intention of leaving so soon. Indeed it was hastily taken.

La première gelée—the first frost had made its appearance, and I remembered my promise.

As I bade my adieus at the Villa Dardenville, the Madame also extracted a promise from me—to the effect that I should not speak of what she had told me—even to Luis himself. She was desirous that things should take their natural course.

CHAPTER IX.

THE POST-OFFICE.

ON my return to New Orleans, one of my earliest solicitudes was about my European correspondence. There letters are not delivered by a carrier, or were not at the time of which I speak. To obtain them, you must either send to the Post-office, or go for them yourself; and expecting some letters of importance, I chose the latter alternative.

I reached the office at the hour when the Atlantic steamer's mail was being delivered. As is usual at that time, there was a crowd around the delivery window; but by means of the simple contrivance of a gallery, or *coulisse*, each applicant was enabled to take his turn. I fell into rank, and awaited mine.

As we moved gradually forward, I could hear the different individuals asking for their letters—each giving his name, or sometimes both name and address.

Rarely was any question asked, beyond the demand for the amount of postage—the applicant paying it through the delivery-window, receiving the letter, and passing on to make room for the impatient gentleman in his rear.

I had arrived within some half dozen files of the box, when I heard pronounced a well-known name.

“*M. Luis De Hauteroche.*”

It was not very distinctly enunciated—in fact rather in a sort of muttered tone—but I could not be mistaken as to the name.

There was nothing to surprise me in this. The young lawyer was no doubt there to receive his morning correspondence, like any other man of business. I should not have given a thought to the circumstance, farther than to congratulate myself on the good fortune of having opportunely encountered my friend—since I was just on my way to call upon him, at his office. I say, I should have given no farther thought to the circumstance; but, just as the letter was being delivered, I overheard the words “From St. Louis,” pronounced by the delivery clerk. No doubt it was some matter relating to the amount of postage; but the phrase had a singular effect on my ears, and at once called up a train of ideas.

“So,” soliloquized I, “Monsieur Luis has received *the* letter. The mail must have come down by the same boat in which I travelled. Very amusing! I should know the contents of that epistle better than he. Ha! ha! ha! Perhaps the most important letter he ever received in his life! The opening of that envelope will reveal to him a world of happiness. Within, he will find the offer of a hand, a heart, and a fortune. Lucky fellow! he is indeed to be envied!”

I should have felt greatly inclined to have anticipated the post in its office, and to have had the pleasure of imparting the delicious news *viva-voce*, but was restrained by remembering the injunctions of Madame Dardonville. I was curious, however, to observe the effect which the letter

from St. Louis would produce upon my friend ; and I leaned over to catch a glimpse of his face. It might not be he who had inquired for the letter—some messenger from the office, perhaps,—and it now occurred to me that it was not his voice I had heard. But I was unable to determine the point. Three or four very stout tall fellows were in front ; and, twist myself as I might, I could not see over or around them. “Never mind !” thought I, “I shall follow him directly to his office, and then—”

This reflection was interrupted by observing my friend, as I supposed, emerge from the exit end of the slip, and pass into the street. I thought it was he, and yet I was not quite certain. His back was towards me ; but as he walked out of the portico, he turned slightly, and I caught a momentary glimpse of his side face. It was certainly like him ; but I was struck with a sudden impression that it was more like the face of M. Despard. This caused me to scrutinize the figure with more eagerness ; but some one stepped in front of me, and when I looked again, he was gone out of sight.

“It matters little,” thought I, “as I am on my way to De Hauteroche’s office, where, at this hour, I shall, no doubt, find him.”

After waiting as patiently as possible for my “turn,” I obtained it at length ; and, possessing myself of the expected letters, I sallied out into the street. I did not go direct to the office of my friend, but made a long detour—to give me time to glean the contents of my correspondence.

I arrived at length in the Rue Royale. As I had anticipated, De Hauteroche was in his office, and received me with a genuine expression of welcome.

He was differently dressed from the man I had seen—

in a coat altogether unlike ! There was hardly time to have changed it ? It could not have been he !

"*Parbleu !* my friend, what's the matter ?" he inquired, observing my astonishment. "Do you perceive any change in me since we parted ? I hope none for the worse, eh ?"

"Answer me !" said I, without replying to his question "How long have you had that coat on ?"

"Ha ! ha ! what an eccentric question ! ha ! ha ! ha ! I fear, *mon ami*, you have left more than your heart in St. Louis, ha ! ha ! ha !"

"Nay, please answer my question—how long ?"

"To-day, do you mean ?"

"Yes, to-day."

"Oh ! about an hour. It is my business coat. I put it on when I came into the office, about an hour ago."

"And you have not had it off since ?"

"No."

"You have not been out of the office either ?"

"Not that I am aware of, *mon ami* ; but pray why do you make these inquiries ?"

"Simply because I fancied I saw you just now."

"Where ?"

"At the Post-office."

"Oh, no ! I was not there. I never go. I always send for my letters ; it is so unpleasant, squeezing through the horrid crowd."

"I certainly saw some one wonderfully like you ; and now I am convinced of what I had only suspected, that he whom I saw was that same gentleman, to whom I am indebted for your acquaintance."

"*Peste !*" exclaimed the young Creole, springing to his feet, and assuming a serious countenance. "Likely enough it may be. *Mon Dieu !* this is intolerable. Do you know,

my friend, that I am frequently mistaken for him, and he for me ; and what is still worse, I have reason to believe that the fellow has, on more than one occasion, personated me. *Mère de Dieu !* it is not to be borne ; and if I can only get proof of it—I am even now about the affair—if I can only establish the proofs, I shall effectually put a stop to it. He shall find I can handle the small sword a little more skilfully than your unfortunate friend. *Mon Dieu !* it is infamous : a common *sportsman*—a swindler—even worse, I have heard ; and to think how my character suffers ! Why no later than yesterday, would you believe it, I was joked by one of my oldest and most respected friends, for having figured at a low quadroom ball in the Faubourg Tremé ! It is positively vexatious !”

Of course I assented to this denunciation, and to the necessity of some inquiry being made into the goings on of M. Jacques Despard. During my winter sojourn in New Orleans, I had more than once dropped accidentally upon this last mentioned personage, but never did I observe him in any very creditable position. It did not need the declaration of De Hauteroche, to prove to me that he was both *sportsman* (gambler) and swindler ; but just then other matters came before my mind. I was the bearer of a pretty little billet from Olympe to Adele ; and the hour had arrived in which it was proper for me to make my call and deliver it. Leaving my friend, therefore, to his books and briefs, I went off upon my errand.

I was a little puzzled at De Hauteroche's behaviour. He must have received the letter in time to have read it before my arrival at the office ; and yet I observed none of the effect that the reading of such an important document would be likely to produce. On further reflection I felt convinced that he could not have read it at all. Perhaps

his messenger, who had taken it from the post-office, had not returned. Or, what was likely enough, it might not be *that* letter, but some other one of no importance, or more probable still, there might have been none, and I had mistaken the name. Certainly, if it were the epistle I supposed it to be, and if he had already perused it, the effect was far from what I should have expected. Of course I did not imagine he would appear in ecstasies in my presence, and all at once reveal to me the secret of his happiness ; but, on the other hand, I could not account for the imperturbable coolness he had exhibited throughout our short interview—his thoughts, indeed, only occupied by vexation at the unfortunate resemblance he bore to the gambler. Of course, then, he could have had no letter—at least not one that offered him a wife and a fortune. I might have ascertained this to a certainty by simply putting a question, and some vague suspicion floating about in my mind, half prompted me to do so ; but I remembered the caution which I had received from the little Madame Dardonville—besides, it was a delicate point, and I dreaded being deemed a meddler. After all, I had no doubt about the matter. His supreme happiness was still unknown to him. The messenger of glad tidings had not yet arrived. The next mail-boat would bring the precious epistle, and then——

I had entered the vine-shadowed verandah in the Rue Bourgogne. The green *jalousie* opened at the sound of my steps ; and those beautiful brown eyes, smiling upon me through the fringework of the white curtains, carried my thoughts into a new current. Luis and his affairs were alike forgotten. I had eyes and thoughts only for Adele.

CHAPTER X.

ANOTHER EPISTLE.

THE hospitality of my Creole friends had not cooled in my absence, and my visits were as frequent as of yore. I had now much to tell them of. My prairie excursion had furnished me with facts—deeds upon which I could descant. It pleased me to fancy I had an attentive listener in Adele. I could make Luis listen too at times—especially when I dwelt upon the merits of Olympe. No doubt it would have flattered me to believe that Adele was a little jealous, but I could not tell. I only knew that she liked better to hear me discourse upon the wonders of prairie land, than to listen to the praises of Olympe. But Adele had much romance in her disposition, and the plumed and painted horsemen of the plains—the chivalry of modern days—almost rival in interest the steel-clad heroes of the mediæval time—certainly they are quite as brave, and perhaps not much more barbaric.

My visits to the Rue Bourgogne were of daily recurrence. Besides the other occupation, I could not help closely regarding the behaviour of Luis. I was watching for some sign, but day after day passed without his showing any. The letter had not yet come to hand. My position was a strange one. With one word I could have made De Hauteroche supremely happy; and yet my promise hindered me from uttering that word. It was really tantalizing to be thus restrained—for the pleasure of giving happiness is almost equal to that of receiving it.

A week passed, and still no word—no sign of the letter having been received; and then the half of another week without report. Two mail-packets I knew had come down

from St. Louis—for I had taken the pains to ascertain this fact—but neither brought the precious epistle.

Had Madame Dardonville not written after all? or had her letter miscarried?

The former I could not reconcile with probability, after what she had said: the latter was perfectly probable, considering the character of the American post-office, and the adventurous vagaries that sometimes occur to an American mail bag, in its transit upon the great western rivers.

Still the route from St. Louis to New Orleans was a direct one. There was but one shipment from port to port, and where could be the risk?

I was puzzled, therefore, at the non-arrival of the letter. In truth, I was something more than puzzled. At times I felt a vague feeling of uneasiness as to its fate; and this was more definite, when I reflected on the incident that had occurred at the post-office on the morning after my return. I could not well doubt that some one asked for a letter for Luis De Hauteroche; for though the words were mumbled in a low tone, they reached my ear with sufficient distinctness. At the time I had not the shadow of a doubt about the name.

Did De Hauteroche receive a letter that morning, and from St. Louis? For reasons given, I had never asked him, but I could no longer see any harm in putting the question. If an unimportant letter, he might not remember it; and whether or no, the question would surprize and puzzle him. But no matter. It was important I should have an answer—yes or no. I needed that to resolve a doubt—a dark suspicion that was shaping itself in my mind.

I came to the determination to call upon him: and at once put the interrogatory—*outré* as it might seem.

I was preparing to sally forth from my hotel chamber, when a somewhat impetuous knock at the door announced an impatient visitor. It was the man I was about to seek—Luis De Hauteroche himself.

I saw that he was strangely excited about something.

"My friend," he exclaimed on entering, "what can this mean? I have just had a letter from St. Louis—from Madame Dardonville—and for the life of me I cannot comprehend it. It speaks of a will—of conditions—of Olympe—of strange contingencies. *Mon Dieu!* I am perplexed. What is it? You have lately seen Madame. Perhaps you can explain it? Speak, friend! can you?"

While giving utterance to this incoherent speech, De Hauteroche had drawn out a letter, and thrust it into my hand. I opened and read:—

"Mon cher Luis,—Since my letter, accompanying the copy of my lamented husband's will, I find that my duties as administratrix will detain us in St. Louis a week longer than I had anticipated. If you have not started, therefore, before receiving this, I wish to suggest a change in our programme—that is, instead of coming alone, you should bring Adele along with you, and we can all return together. Perhaps your young English friend would be of the party; though, from the anxiety which he exhibited at the first appearance of frost here, perhaps he thinks our St. Louis climate too cold for him. He shall be welcome notwithstanding.

"You could come by the "Sultana," which I see by the New Orleans papers is to sail on the 25th. Come by her if possible, as she is our favourite boat, and I should wish to go back in her.

"Yours sincerely,

"Emilie Dardonville."

"P.S.—Remember, Luis, that your choice is free, and though I shall be proud to have you for my son-in-law, I shall put no constraint upon Olympe. She knows the conditions of her father's will, and I have no fear of her desiring to controvert what was with him a dying wish. I am well assured that her heart is still her own; and since you have always been the favourite friend of her childhood, I think I might promise you success as a suitor. But in this, and everything else relating to the conditions of the will, you must act, dear Luis, as your heart dictates. I know your honourable nature, and have no fear you will act wrongly."

"E. D."

By the time I had finished reading, De Hauteroche had become more collected.

"When did you last hear from Madame Dardonville?" I asked.

"About a month ago—only once since the letter announcing our friend's death."

"And your sister—has she had a letter since?"

"None—except the note brought by yourself from Olympe."

"That could not be the letter referred to here. There was no copy of a will?"

"I never heard of such a thing. This is the first intimation I have had, that M. Dardonville had made a will; and the postscript both surprises and perplexes me. Madame Dardonville speaks of conditions—of Olympe being bound by some wish of her father! What conditions? What wish? Monsieur, for heaven's sake, explain to me if you can!"

"I can."

CHAPTER XL

THE CHEQUE.

DE HAUTEROCHE stood before me in an appealing attitude, and with wild impatience in his looks. I felt that I was going to give him supreme happiness—to fill his cup of bliss to the very brim. I had long ere this fathomed the secret of his heart, and I knew that he loved Olympe with a passionate ardour that he could scarcely conceal. His last visit to St. Louis had settled that point, and though it was doubtful whether the young girl was, at the time, sufficiently forward to have felt the passion of love, I had discovered some traces of a certain tender regard she had exhibited towards him. I had no doubt that she would love him—almost at sight: for to say nothing of the direction which had been given to her thoughts—both parents carefully guiding her affections in the one particular channel—there were other circumstances that would favour this result. Luis De Hauteroche was by far the handsomest gentleman she had ever seen—handsome as well as highly accomplished—and I knew that no pains had been spared to impress Olympe with this idea. He was almost certain to be beloved by her.

Concealment of what I knew, was no longer required of me. My promise to Madame Dardenville was simply to keep silent, until the letter had spoken for itself. It was clear, however, that the letter had miscarried; and it therefore became a necessity that I should declare its contents. I rather joyed at thus having it in my power to make my friend happy; and I hastened to perform the pleasant duty.

In brief detail I made known to him the nature of the

ex-merchant's will—that part of it relating to his daughter and to Luis himself.

Joy overspread the young man's countenance as he listened; and my repetition of those interesting conditions was interrupted only by expressions of gratitude and delight.

For the rest, I knew not the precise contents of Madame Dardonville's letter. These could only be guessed at; but the communication just now received was a good key to that which had been lost.

"What matter," added I, "about the other having gone astray? It is certainly not very agreeable that some post-office peeper should get such an insight into one's family affairs; but after all, it's only a *copy* of the will that has been lost."

"Oh! the will; I care nothing for that, Monsieur—not even if it were the original—the will of Olympe alone concerns me."

"And that I promise will be also in your favour."

"*Merçi*, Monsieur, what a true friend you have proved! How fortunate I should have resembled M. Despard! Ha! ha!"

I almost echoed the reflection—for that resemblance had been the means of introducing me to Adele.

"But come, Monsieur De Hauteroche! the letter of Madame Dardonville requires attention. You must answer the demand. You are expected in St. Louis, to bring the ladies down to New Orleans. If I mistake not the *Sultana* leaves here this very evening; you must go by her."

"And you will go with me? You perceive, Monsieur, you are invited."

"And M'amselle De Hauteroche?"

"Oh! certainly. Adele will go too. In truth, my

sister has not travelled much of late. She has only been once to St. Louis since papa's death. I am sure she will enjoy the trip exceedingly. And you will go, then?"

"Willingly. Your sister will need time for preparation. Shall we proceed to the Rue de Bourgogne?"

"*Allons!* on our way we can call at the post-office. Perhaps the missing letter is still lying there—we may yet recover it."

"It can matter little now, I fancy; but there is no harm in trying."

I had not much hope of success. Something whispered to me that the document was gone from the post-office, and had fallen into other hands: though of what use could it be to any one? Perhaps it had been detained by some one, in the expectation that it contained an enclosure of money—an occurrence which the loose arrangements of the American post-office rendered by no means uncommon.

I was now more than ever convinced of the correctness of my first impressions. On that morning when I visited the post-office, a letter for De Hauteroche had been asked for and taken out; and as he now informed me that he had received no letter, nor did he remember having sent any one to the office on that particular day—there was but one conclusion to be drawn. Some one, unauthorized by him, had obtained the letter—no doubt the very one in question.

The coincidence of Despard's presence—for it must have been he whom I had mistaken for De Hauteroche—led me to other misgivings. I had not seen the person who made inquiry for the letter—the files of men in front preventing me—but judging by the time at which the *sportsman* passed out at the exit end of the slip, he must have been

near the delivery window when the inquiry was made. These circumstances, taken in connection with what I already knew of this person, naturally led me to the conclusion that De Hauteroche's letter had fallen into his hands. His motive for such a vile act I could only guess at. The hope of obtaining money, perhaps—though there might appear but slight probability of that. In truth, the affair was sufficiently inexplicable ; and neither De Hauteroche nor I could arrive at any definite resolution of it at the time.

On our arriving at the post-office, a gleam of light was thrown upon the transaction.

"Has there been any letter addressed to M. Luis De Hauteroche?"

The inquiry referred to a date of some days anterior.

The clerk could not answer that—indeed the question was rather an idle one. Of course, amidst the thousands of letters delivered by the official, it would have been miraculous in him to have remembered a particular one. He had no recollection of such a letter being delivered ; and there was none for the address lying in the office.

"Stay—there *is* a letter that has just come in by an extra mail, for "M. Luis De Hauteroche."

My friend eagerly grasped the document—the more eagerly that he saw upon it the stamp of the St. Louis post-office ! It was scarcely large enough to contain the copy of a will. It could hardly be that of which we were in search.

It proved not to be that, but a document of a very different character. It read thus :

"Monsieur,—The 1,000 dolls. cheque transmitted to you upon the Planters' Bank of New Orleans, by a mistake of

one of our clerks, was not crossed. It has been paid by the Bank and returned. We are anxious to know if it reached your hands safely. Please state by return mail.

"Gardette & Co.,

"Bankers,

"St Louis,

"Alf."

"Mystery of mysteries, Monsieur!" exclaimed De Hauteroche, gasping for breath, as he thrust the letter into my hands. "What can all this mean? I know of no thousand dollars. Never received a cheque—never expected one—know of no one in St. Louis who should have sent it, nor for what purpose! Ho! there must be a mistake. This is not for me."

And the speaker once more referred to the envelope. But the address was full and complete:—

"M. Luis De Hauteroche,

"Avocat,

"16, Rue Royale,

"New Orleans."

There was no other Luis De Hauteroche—no other avocat of the name. Undoubtedly the letter was for him—however little he understood its contents.

I was less puzzled than he. A gleam, or rather a flood of light, was let in upon the mysterious transaction, which to me was no longer a mystery. Whence had come the cheque I could not tell. I could only surmise; and my surmise pointed to the hand of the generous widow of Dardonville. Where it had gone was unfortunately less doubtful,—for the fingers of the *chevalier d'industrie* were

easily recognizable here. Beyond a doubt, M. Despard had got the cheque; and this would account for his after inquiry at the post-office, that led to his obtaining the letter with the will. He had watched the arrival of the mails from St. Louis, and obtained such letters as were addressed to De Hauteroche. Why he had done this at first, it would be difficult to say; but afterwards—after obtaining the money—his object would be to prevent the young lawyer from knowing it, until he could get out of the way.

In all likelihood he was now beyond reach either of accusation or conviction. The two letters which had just come to hand were of themselves evidence, that in all likelihood he was no longer near.

De Hauteroche was furious—half frantic when I imparted to him my convictions; for, although the source whence the 1,000 dollars had come, was still a mystery to him, yet there was the proof of its having been sent, and the presumption of its having been stolen.

The New Orleans police were at once put in charge of the matter; and, as no communication could possibly reach St. Louis sooner than by the *Sultana*, it was resolved that we ourselves should be the bearers of the answer, and call upon the banking-house of Gardette and Co., the moment we arrived in that city.

Detectives were set upon the search for Despard, but of course only as spies—since as yet we could allege nothing stronger than suspicion against him. The *espionage*, however, was likely to prove unsuccessful: for up to the hour of the *Sultana's* leaving—which occurred just at sunset—the sportsman's whereabouts had not been ascertained; and the detectives, in quaint phraseology, declared their belief that the "gentleman was G. T. T." (Gone To Texas).

CHAPTER XII.

THE MISSOURI BELLE.

THE traveller who ascends the mighty Mississippi, will see neither hill nor mountain—nothing that can be called highland—until he has attained a thousand miles from its mouth. Only the bold headland on which stands the town of Natchez, and those very similar projections known as the “Chickasaw Bluffs,” one of which forms the site of the flourishing city of Memphis. All the rest, on both sides of the river, as far as the eye can reach, is low *alluvion*, rising only a few feet above the surface of the stream, and often, for hundreds of miles, periodically drowned by inundation, or covered continuously by a stagnant marsh. The forest hides all this from the eye ; and frequently the banks of the river have the appearance of dry land, when there is not a spot of earth upon which you may rest your foot.

This character continues till you have passed the mouth of the Ohio, and have entered upon the regions of Missouri and the Illinois. There the scene changes as if by magic. The river no more appears wandering over a flat country ; but runs in the bottom of a deep gorge or valley, whose sides are nearly precipitous—often rising to the height of hundreds of feet above the surface of the water.

We had been six days steaming up the river ; and on the seventh at sunset, the *Sultana* reached the highland region, entering the gorge-like valley, just as night was closing over it.

It was the period of a full moon, and as yet the fair queen was low in the heavens—so low that her light fell

upon the water, only in those reaches where the river trended in an easterly or westerly direction.

Whenever the course was north or south—and this was the general direction—the high bluffs completely overshadowed the stream ; and then only the glare of the fires lit up the dark water ravine through which we were passing.

The sudden changes from light to darkness, and from darkness back to brilliant moonlight, had an effect that was curious and interesting. They resembled the transformations in a theatre. One moment we were steaming along in the most sombre shadow—the crest of the bluff, with its crowning trees and *shot* towers, dimly outlined above us—the next, we would shoot out under the white fulness of the moonlight, that rendered even minute objects along the *façade* of the banks, almost as visible as by day.

This ever-shifting panorama appeared more the work of magic, than the effect of natural causes, and I had lingered upon the hurricane-deck to observe its changes long after my companions had gone below.

While thus engaged, my ear caught the peculiar sound produced by the 'scape pipe of a high-pressure boat ; and which is easily distinguished from all other explosive noises. At first it seemed the echo from our own—for I had already noticed the reverberations which the cliffs sent back at different points on our passage. I soon became convinced that the sounds I now heard were not echoes ; but that another boat was making its way through the dark gorges, apparently coming down stream. This was made certain by the sudden appearance of a brilliant lamp directly in front of us, and more conspicuous still was th-

red glare of the fires burning in the furnaces—which are always placed in the forward part of the boat.

It was one of the darkest ravines of the river, where the two boats came in sight of each other ; but the lights of each guided the pilot of the other, and there was neither danger nor difficulty in passing. Each held to the larboard—as two carriages would have done upon an ordinary road—and a wide space was left between them : for the channel, though narrower here than elsewhere, still afforded a sufficiency of room.

It was quick work, however, and the pilot of each boat adroitly performed his duty. The bend was of short reach ; and, from the time I caught sight of the descending steamer, I could scarcely have counted two hundred till she had met and was overlapping the *Sultana*. Like two fiery meteors they brushed past one another—each bearing onward in her own direction, without hail or the exchange of a single word. I had just time, as the stranger glided by, to make out upon her wheelhouse the name *Missouri Belle* ; but, before I could have counted another hundred, she had forged round a projection of the bluffs, and her lights were no longer visible.

I stood gazing after her with emotions vivid and singular. What was there that caused me to do so ? The incident of meeting a steamboat on the Mississippi ? There was nothing extraordinary in that—an occurrence so common as scarcely to deserve being regarded an incident. Was it the name of the boat, which I had been enabled to decipher ? Some old remembrance connected with her ?

No, nothing of the kind. The emotions that had suddenly arisen in my mind, were springing from a very different cause ; and I may at once declare it.

Abaft of the *Missouri Belle*, and in the little gangway that encircles the ladies' cabin, I had caught sight of a group of three persons, standing outside one of the state-room doors. Of the identity of these persons I could not be mistaken—though the sight was sufficient to stagger my belief. Of two I was sure: for the light shone more fairly upon them. The third only remained unrecognized—the darkness hindering my view of this individual—and, but for a horrid suspicion that flashed into my brain at the moment, I should not have thought of even guessing at his identity.

The two that I had recognized were women—ladies. They were Madame Dardonville and her daughter Olympe. The third was a man, who stood sufficiently near them to come under the same light—the glare of the *Sultana's* fires—but the unexpected presence of the ladies so astounded me, that I did not see *him* till too late to distinguish either his form or face. I only saw that it was a man—nothing more; but, for all that, a painful suspicion—a presentiment of some horrid evil—took immediate possession of my soul; and I became at once imbued with the idea that my friends were in danger.

Gladly would I have adopted the belief that there was some error; and that what I had seen was a fancy—a vision of the brain. Certainly the glimpse I had of those fair faces—especially of the beautiful countenance of Olympe—was short and evanescent as any dream could have been; but it was too real. I saw her face well enough to recognize it—well enough even to note its expression, which I fancied to be more sad than smiling. Beyond a doubt the widow and her daughter had passed us in the *Missouri Belle*—strange though the circumstance might and did appear to me at the moment.

And what, after all, was there strange in it? Could it not be easily explained? Her affairs may have been settled earlier than she expected—they should have been arranged by that time—and, without waiting for De Hauteroche, she may have formed the resolution to travel without him. The journey from St. Louis to New Orleans is accounted nothing; and in all parts of the States ladies are accustomed to travel alone, and may do so with perfect safety and convenience.

But, then, they were *not* alone—at least they did not appear to be. There was the man—the man!

Some friend, perhaps, of the family? Some distant relative or retainer? Perhaps, only a domestic?

Could I have believed this, I should have escaped that feeling of uneasiness that was every moment growing upon me; but I could not. Something seemed to tell me, that the man I had seen was neither relative nor friend—but an *enemy*. Something seemed to whisper his name—*M. Jacques Despard*.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TWO PILOTS.

My suspicions were only vague and ill-defined. I had the presentiment of an evil—but what evil? Even admitting that the man who accompanied Madame Dardonville and her daughter, was the swindler Despard—what injury could they receive from his presence? But what reason had I to think it was he? Not the least. Indeed, upon reflection, I could not myself imagine what had brought this man into my mind: though that might be accounted

for—since the forgery, of which we more than suspected him, was one of the first things to be inquired into, on our arrival in St. Louis—and there we should be in the morning.

There was little reason, however, in all this, to connect him with the presence of the ladies on board the *Missouri Belle*; and the more I reflected on the matter, the more improbable did it appear.

The circumstance of meeting Madame Dardonville on her way downward, was certainly strange enough—especially when I remembered her letter. In that she had distinctly arranged that we should come up for her; and had stated her intention to travel back by the *Sultana*. Had she written again, and once more altered the arrangement? It had been her original design, as appeared by her second letter—to have gone to New Orleans at an earlier date; but some business, connected with the administration of her estate, had delayed her. Was this cause of detention unexpectedly removed? and had she, in consequence, started southward, without waiting for the *Sultana*? Perhaps she had written a third letter, which had not reached New Orleans at the time of our leaving it?

All these were probabilities—or rather possibilities—that passed through my mind; but, viewing them in their most favourable aspect, they failed to satisfy me. I could not help suspecting that there was a mystery—that there was something wrong.

The pilot was at his post inside his little cabin of glass, silent as is his wont. I would have entered into conversation with him; but just at that moment his second appeared, coming out of the pilot's cabin, and rubbing his eyes to get them open for his work. A bell had just announced the hour of change, and the second was about

to enter on his turn of duty. The ceremony was simple ; and consisted in the old pilot handing over the spokes to the one that relieved him, and then squeezing himself out of the glass house. A little conversation followed before the relieved officer retired to his "bunk." Seated within ear-shot, I could not help overhearing it.

"Durnation dark—whar are we anyhow ?"

"Jest below *Shirt-tail* bend—thar's the bluff."

"Durn me ! if I can see a steim. I couldn't see a white hoss at the eend of my nose this minnit. I reckon I'll be runnin' the old boat into the bank, if it don't clear a bit."

It certainly was a dark night. Some heavy clouds had drifted over the moon, and she was no longer visible.

"Oh, no fear," rejoined the other, you ain't got the sleep out of your eyes, you'll see clearer byn' bye."

"Wal—it's to be hoped. Much dirt in the water?"

"A few—there's a putty considerable drift comin down. That last spell o' wet has done it, I reckon. I han't seed many *sawyers*, but you'd better keep a sharp look-out. Thar's bound to be some o' 'em settled in the bend."

"I'll watch 'em—say, what boat was that?"

"*Massoury Belle*"

"Oh ! she's in the Ohio trade now ?"

"So I've heerd."

"I thought they wouldn't run her to Orleans agin. She aint the style for below."

"No, she wa'nt big enough. Old What's-his-name has bought her, and 's goin' to run her reg'larly 'tween St. Louis and Cinc'natti. She's jest the thing for that trade. Good night !"

Thus ended the dialogue ; and, in a few seconds after, the retiring officer had entered one of the little boxes

adjacent to the wheel-house, and shut himself up for the night.

Up to a certain point I had listened to this conversation with but little attention, and might not have noticed it at all, but for its quaint oddity. All at once, however, it became deeply interesting to me—at that point when it turned upon the *Missouri Belle*.

What could the man mean by the boat no longer running to Orleans? New Orleans, of course, he meant—for these men are perfect Lacons in conversation, and I understood the curtailment of the name. Was it possible the boat was not *then* on her way to New Orleans? and was she bound round to Cincinatti?

If such were the case, the presence of Madame Dardonville on board of her, would indeed be a mysterious circumstance! For what purpose could *she* be going to Cincinatti? and, least of all, at such a crisis—when she should be expecting her friends from the south?

Had I heard aright? Or had I properly interpreted what I had heard?

Beyond doubt the pilot's words were to the effect, that the boat was no longer to run to New Orleans, but from St. Louis to Cincinatti, and of course *vice versâ*. Perhaps he might mean prospectively? Was it some new arrangement of ownership, not yet completed?

The boat might be hereafter intended for the Ohio trade, but had not yet commenced running to Cincinatti: she might be making her final trip to New Orleans? Only this hypothesis could explain the puzzle.

It occurred to me that I might arrive at a more lucid understanding by an application to the occupant of the wheel-house—at all events he could interpret what I had just heard. I addressed myself to him accordingly.

I had no fear of being snubbed. These Mississippi pilots are fine fellows, sometimes a little dry with curious intruders, but never rude, never impolite to a gentleman.

"Did I understand you to say that the boat we have just met—the *Missouri Belle*—is in the Ohio trade?"

"Wal, stranger, that's what I've heerd."

"That means that she is to run between St. Louis and Cincinatti."

"Course it do."

"And do you think she is on her way to Cincinatti now?"

"Why, stranger, whar else 'ud she be goin'?"

"I thought she might be going down to New Orleans."

"Wal, she did run thar form'lly; but she's off that now. She's changed hands lately, and's been put on the other line, 'tween St. Louis and Cinc'natti, which air a trade she'll suit for better. She wa'nt big enough for below; but bein' a light draught critter, she's jest the thing to get over the Falls."

"And you are certain she is now on the way to Cincinatti?"

"No, that I aint, stranger. She may be on top o' a durnation snag, or chuck up on a sand-bar at this minnit, for what I can tell. All I know for sartin is that she's boun' for Cinc'natti; and if nothin' happens her, she'll be thar in less 'n four days from now. Whether she breaks down, howsomever, air a question beyont my calkerlations. She mout an' she mout not."

With this subline resignation to probabilities, the tall speaker in the glass house, evidently intended that the conversation should come to a close, for I observed that he bent his gaze more eagerly ahead, and seemed to direct his attention exclusively to the tiller. Perhaps the idea of

the *Missouri Belle* resting upon a snag or sand-bar, had suggested the probability of the *Sultana* getting into a similar predicament, and stimulated him to increased caution in the performance of his duty.

Though I had succeeded in concealing my emotions from the steersman, it was not without an effort. The information he imparted was full of serious meaning; and augmented the feeling of uneasiness, from which I already suffered. Stronger than ever did I feel that presentiment of evil.

The statement of the pilot admitted of no interpretation but one. It was direct and point blank: that the *Missouri Belle* was bound for Cincinnati. The man could have no motive for misleading me. Why should he? I had asked a simple question, without much show of interest or curiosity; he had answered it from pure politeness. There was not the slightest reason why he should make a misstatement; and I accepted what he had said as the truth.

The riddle had assumed a new character, and had become altogether more difficult of solution. "What," I repeated to myself, "can Madame Dardonville have to do on a Cincinnati boat? Surely there is something astray?"

It did not appear exactly *en regle*, for the lady to leave St. Louis in the expectation of a visit from her New Orleans friends; but I presumed she had sent a second despatch, which had not been received. Moreover, she was going down to them, and it mattered less about their coming up for her. These were my first reflections after seeing her upon the down-river boat, and until I had heard the talk of the two pilots. Now, however, circumstances had a different appearance. On the *Missouri Belle* she could not be going to New Orleans, but to Cincinnati. Did she expect us to follow her there? and for what end?

Perhaps she would only go as far as the Ohio mouth, in this boat, and there wait for another, coming down the Ohio river? This method of getting from St. Louis to New Orleans was common enough, when there did not chance to be a boat going direct. The large hotel at Cairo offered a temporary sojourn for such passengers. But why should Madame Dardonville adopt this roundabout method, and especially at such a time?

A score of conjectures passed through my mind, all ending idly. The only one at all satisfactory, was that, perhaps, I had been in an error from the very beginning. Perhaps, after all, I had neither seen Madame Dardonville nor her daughter; but two ladies who very much resembled them! It was not the first *equivoque* I had experienced; and this should have rendered me less confident of the evidence of my senses. Notwithstanding these reflections, however, I could not convince myself that I was in error.

So long, therefore, as there was the slightest doubt, I felt that it would be imprudent to communicate my suspicions to my travelling companions. It could serve no good purpose; and would only render them uneasy, as I was myself,—in all likelihood, much more so. Ere long we should all know the truth; and should it prove that I was mistaken, I would have the satisfaction of having saved my friends from unnecessary pain, and myself from ridicule.

Though I joined them the moment after, I gave neither of them the slightest hint of what I had seen or suspected.

CHAPTER XIV.

NO ONE ON THE WATCH.

It was ten o'clock on the following day, when the *Sultana*, snorting under a full head of steam, brought us within sight of the "Mound City," so called from certain Indian tumuli, that here form a conspicuous feature on the banks of the mighty river.

Long before reaching our destination, my travelling companions and I had ascended to the hurricane-deck ; and we were straining our eyes to catch sight, not of the spires and cupolas that overtop the town, but of a building that had for all of us a far greater interest—a white cottage or villa, with green venetians—the villa Dardenville. As it stood conspicuously near the western bank of the river, and we knew that it was visible from the level of the water, we expected soon to be gratified with a view of it, especially, as we were now nearly opposite to it. A skirting of oak woods appeared alone to conceal it ; and, as the boat forged a-head, we gazed eagerly into the vista that was gradually opening beyond them.

Slowly and gently, as if by the passage of a panoramic picture, the villa was disclosed to our view ; and my companions hailed its appearance with exclamations of delight. Visions of a happy meeting with old dear friends, of sumptuous hospitality, of free rural enjoyments, of many pleasurable incidents, were before the minds of both ; and as for Luis, the sight of that pretty homestead could not fail to call up emotions of a still more thrilling kind.

Though I had myself seen the villa before, and from the water, it was a new sight to both my friends. It was, in fact, a new house, and had been built by Dardenville on

retiring from business. On Luis's last visit to St. Louis, the family was residing in the city. It was shortly after, that they had removed to the charming abode on the bluff.

My friends were enthusiastic in their praises of the pretty mansion. They admired its style of architecture, its smooth sloping lawn, its shrubberies; in short, both were in the mood for admiring.

As the boat arrived directly in front of it, and the house came fully into view, it did not strike me as presenting so hospitable an appearance: in fact, an observer, knowing nothing of its inmates, would have given it a character altogether different. The front door was shut close; and so, too, were the venetian shutters, every one of them. Even the gate of the verandah railings appeared to be latched and locked. There was no life, human or animal, stirring about the place; not a creature to be seen. There was no smoke issuing from the chimneys, not a film. The place had the appearance of being uninhabited, deserted!

My companions could not help noticing this, though without having any suspicion that the house might be empty.

"Why are the windows closed? and on such a beautiful morning?"

I could only make answer to this pertinent query, by observing that the house faced eastward; and the sun might be too strong at that hour.

"*Parbleu!*" exclaimed Adele, "I feel cold enough; you see, I shiver? For my part, I should open every blind, and admit all the sun I could get. I shall do so, as soon as we get there."

"But la!" continued she, after a pause, "surely they expect us? and by the *Sultana*, too? You would think

some one would be on the look out? They must certainly hear the blowing of our grand boat? And yet no one appears—not even a face at the windows! Come, Ma'mselle Olympe, this is barely kind of you.”

Adele endeavoured to disfigure her beautiful countenance with a slight grimace, expressive of chagrin; but the laugh that followed showed how little she was in earnest.

“It may be,” interposed Luis, “they are not astir yet: it is early.”

“Early, *mon frère*? it is ten o'clock!”

“True, it is that hour,” assented Luis, after consulting his watch.

“Besides, where is old Pluto? where Calypse and Chloe? Some of them should be abroad. At least, one of them might have been playing sentinel, I think?”

These were the familiar names of Madame Dardonville's domestics, all known to myself.

“Ah!” exclaimed Adele, a new thought suggesting itself, “I fancy I can explain. Madame and Olympe are gone up to town, that's it. Perhaps she knows that the boat is near: she may have heard it from below, and has driven up to the landing to meet us? Of course Pluto would be with her, and the others are busy in the house. That explains all. So we shall meet her at the landing. Well, that will be charming!”

I gave my assent to this explanation, though far from believing it to be the true one. The deserted appearance of the house was a new element of anxiety to me; and, combined with what I already knew, almost confirmed the terrible suspicion that had shaped itself in my imagination. Though struggling to conceal my real thoughts, it was with difficulty I succeeded in doing so. More than

once my companions regarded me with inquiring looks : as though they observed a singularity in my bearing and behaviour.

With a sense of the keenest anxiety, I looked forward to the moment of our arrival : I did not indulge in much hope that Adele's conjecture would prove correct.

Alas ! it did not. As the boat was warped in, broadside to the wharf, I scanned the crowd with keen glances : not a group—scarcely an individual—escaped my observation. There were no ladies there—no Madame Dardonville, no Olympe ! There were carriages, but not theirs. No private carriages were to be seen, only hackneys waiting for a fare from the boat.

I looked at Adele. There was a slight curl upon her pretty lip—this time really expressive of disappointment and chagrin.

"Perhaps they are up in the town?" I suggested, gently.

"Nay, Monsieur, they should be *here*. It is cruel of Olympe."

"The Madame may have business?"

"*N'importe pas*."

I saw by this that Adele was really offended. Perhaps she had been hearing too many encomiums upon Olympe's beauty. It is not *woman* to like this ; and least to be expected from a woman who is herself a beauty.

Nothing remained but to engage a hackney. This was the work of a moment ; and, as our united luggage was not large, we were soon passing through the streets of St. Louis. The Jehu had received his directions to drive to the Villa Dardonville. He knew the house, and we were soon carried beyond the suburbs in that direction.

We met people on the way. The faces of one or two of them were known to me. As the carriage was an open phaeton, we could all be seen. I observed the eyes of these people turn towards us with a strange expression : a look, as I thought, of astonishment ! Luis appeared more especially to be the object of interest. As we were driving rapidly, however, no one spoke. If they had anything to say, there was no opportunity for them to say it. I do not know whether either of my companions observed this, nor might I have done so ; but for the foreknowledge of which I was possessed.

We at length reached our destination. The phaeton being driven to the front, halted opposite the verandah. No one rushed out to greet us ! no one opened the door !

"O est drole !" murmured Adele.

Luis stepped out of the carriage and knocked. A heavy foot was heard inside : some one coming along the hallway ? There was heard the turning of a bolt, and then the rattle of a chain. Strange ! the door has been locked !

It was opened at length, though slowly, and with some degree of caution ; and then a round black face was presented to our view. It was the face of Pluto.



CHAPTER XV.

PLUTO.

THE expression depicted on the countenance of the negro, told us at once that we were not expected. His lips stood apart, his eyes rolled in their sockets, till only the whites

were visible, and he stood with both hands raised aloft in an attitude of astonishment!

"Why—wy—wy, mass'r Looey! war de dibbil hab you come from?"

"Why, Pluto, where should I have come from, but from home?—from New Orleans?"

"Aw! massr! don't joke dis ole nigga. You know you hadn't time to get down dar; you'd scarce time to get to the mouf ob de 'hio."

"The mouth of the Ohio?"

"Ya, massr! You know de *Belle* didn't start till near night; an' how could you a got dar? Golly, massr! hope dar's nuffin wrong? wha' did you leave missa and Ma'aselle 'Lympe?"

"Where did I leave your mistress and Mademoiselle Olympe! I have not seen either of them, since I last saw you, Pluto."

"O Gorramighty! massr Looey, how you *do* run dis ole nigga, 'case he half blind. Hyaw! hyaw! hyaw!"

"Half crazed, rather, Pluto, I should fancy!"

"Craze, massr? law massr, no. But do tell, Massr Looey, whar be de ma'm an ma'aselle?"

"That is just the question I have to put to you. Where are they?"

"Lor, massr, how can I tell. Didn't I drive you all 'board de boat yes'day noon, and sure massr, I han't seed none ob you since den?"

"Drive us aboard the boat! drive who?"

"Why you, massr, an' Missa Dardonville, and Ma'aselle 'Lympe."

"Of what boat are you speaking?"

"De big boat for Cincinatti—da *Massoury Belle*, dey calls her."

De Hauteroche turned towards me with a look expressive of stupefied wonder.

"What!" he gasped out, "what can this fellow mean?"

"Answer me, Pluto," said I, addressing myself to the domestic, "you say you drove your mistress and Mademoiselle to the boat—the *Missouri Belle*?"

"Ya, massr, dat for sartin'."

"And did they embark in her?"

"Sartin, massr, I seed um go off afore I leff de waff."

"A gentleman accompanied them?"

"Ob coos, Massr Hoteroche 'companied dem."

"Who said it was M. De Hauteroche?"

"Ebbery body say so; but law, massr, dis chile aint blind. I see Massr Looey ma'seff; an' sure he wa stayin' at de house for more 'n a week. You's only a playin' possum wi' de ole nigga? dat's what you are a doin'."

"Another word, Pluto! Did Madame tell you where she was going?"

"No, massr, not adzactly tell me, but I knows whar, for all dat. Hyaw, hyaw, hyaw!" and the darkie displayed his ivories in a broad grin, while a knowing look was exhibited in the corners of his great eyes.

"Where was it?" I asked, without heeding his ludicrous humour.

"Gorry, massr; p'raps Massr Looey, he no let me tell?" and the black turned an inquisitive look towards De Hauter che.

"It is just what I desire you to do. For Heaven's sake, man, do not delay! This is most mysterious."

"Berry queer! Well, Massr Looey, since you's no objection, I tell dis gemman and Missy Adele; but I thort dey know'd all 'bout it a'ready. Ob coorse we brak folk

only knows what we've heerd. It may be true, an' it mayent, for all dat."

"Out with it, man!"

"Well, de folks all say dat Ma'aselle 'Lympe she go be marry to young Massr Looey; and dat dey all go de way to France to have de knot tied—all de way to France! hyaw! hyaw!"

"To France?"

"Yes, massr. De say young massr—hyaw—he have rich uncle dar—he die—he leave all to Massr Looey—hope him true Massr Looey—dat young massr he go to get de money, and den he marry Ma'aselle 'Lympe, and den dey all come back hyar."

"And who has said all this?"

"Law, massr, ebbery body know 'im—ebbery body say so. 'Sides, I hear Massr Gardette, de banker, tell one gemman, day I drove massr to de bank. Golly, de big cheque missa did draw out dat berry day! She say 'twar for trabbelin 'spenses. Dar wa dollars 'nuf to a trabbled em all ober de world. But say, Massr Looey, why hab you come back? Sure missa an' Ma'aselle 'Lympe are safe? Hope dar's nuffin wrong, massr?"

De Hauteroche appeared stupified with amazement—absolutely petrified. Pluto might as well have addressed his inquiries to a stone.

To question the negro further would have been idle. Indeed, I was already in possession of sufficient data to determine the outlines of this mysterious affair—if not to make known the whole of its details. I was now convinced that a horrid crime was being committed—a base deception practised—of which Madame Dardonville and her daughter were the dupes and victims. In all likelihood, some one was personating Luis De Hauteroche;

and, under this guise—and by some pretence about a legacy, as report declared—had induced Madame Dardenville to leave her home and make a journey to France! This part of the story might be true or not; but certain it was that the ladies had gone away in the company of some one who was personating Luis de Hauteroche. Whither they were gone, and with what intent, I could not determine; but I had little doubt as to who was their companion and betrayer: it was the *sportsman*, Despard.

I did not communicate my thoughts to either of my companions. I could see no object in doing so. Their hour of misery would arrive soon enough. I thought it better they should suffer an hour of mystery.

I knew that M. Gardette was a friend of Madame Dardenville—a family friend, as such men are termed. It was probable, therefore, he could throw light on the matter. He had cashed a large cheque, it appeared, and must know something of the object for which it was drawn. Moreover, the affair of the lost bill of exchange was to be inquired after. Both objects could be accomplished at the same time.

I proposed, therefore, that we should at once proceed to the banking-house of M. Gardette. My companions, overcome with astonishment, yielded unresistingly to my proposal, and, giving the Jehu the necessary orders, we were driven back in the direction of the city.

Half an hour brought us to the banking-house, where the horses were pulled up. Adele sat in the carriage and her brother, acting under my advice, remained with her. I thought it better I should see M. Gardette alone. Not yet had the time arrived, when it was necessary Dr Hauteroche should know the full extent of his loss.

CHAPTER XVI.

M. GARDETTE.

I HAD the good fortune to find M. Gardette in his counting-house. He knew me ; and our interview proceeded without embarrassment.

I shall not weary my reader with the conversation that passed between us ; nor yet detail all the circumstances that came to my knowledge during that interview. Suffice it to give only those more immediately connected with the thread of my narrative ; and which of themselves were sufficient to confirm my most fearful suspicion.

Some one like De Hauteroche—resembling him almost as a counterpart—had assumed his name ; had deceived Madame Dardonville as to the identity ; and by an influence, as yet only guessed at, had persuaded herself and daughter to take the extraordinary step of accompanying him to Europe !

All this might easily have been effected. There was no improbability in it, when it is remembered that it was some years since De Hauteroche had been seen either by mother or daughter.

Another circumstance, which I now recollected, strengthened the probability of their having gone on this journey. I remembered Madame Dardonville having told me that she contemplated a journey to Europe, at some not distant period—that she was desirous of visiting the home of her youth, and renewing some ancient friendships. Moreover, she had stated her intention of residing some time in Paris, in order that in the world's fashionable metropolis, she might obtain for her daughter the finishing touch of a polite education.

This was but an ambition common to most transatlantic *émigrés*, especially, as in the case of the widow of Dardonville, where pecuniary considerations offered no obstacle. It was not improbable, therefore, that she had carried, or was about to carry, this design into execution.

All that seemed singular was the hasty manner in which she had undertaken the journey : for in her letters to New Orleans she had not said a word of such intention. It was easy to conceive, however, that the counterfeit De Hauteroche, acting with the influence which the real De Hauteroche possessed, might, without much difficulty, have thus brought about the event.

In reality, it was no longer a conjecture, but a *fait accompli*. He had done it ; and Madame Dardonville and her daughter, in the company of an accomplished brigand, were now on their way to Europe. Of the truth of this, the facts stated by the banker were sufficient proof. M. Gardette was aware of my friendly relations with the family, and without reserve he communicated all he knew. His knowledge was not much, and related chiefly to matters of business. Of course, like other friends of the family, he had heard the rumours that were afloat ; and in his business capacity he was made aware of the intended trip to Europe. A circular letter for a large amount (10,000 dollars), made payable in Paris, besides a small cheque for present purposes, had naturally made him aware that some grand manoeuvre was going on, and that Paris was to be the *but* of a journey. Further than this, he had not been intrusted with the confidence of the family. All else he had drawn from rumours, which were current in the place. It would not be easy for a lady, so conspicuous as the rich widow Dardonville, to keep even family secrets concealed. Rumour could not be cheated of her tales ; and that

which was generally believed in this instance, appeared to be the correct one.

The banker had heard of the projected marriage of Olympe ; that young De Hauteroche was to be the son-in-law ; and, indeed, some of the peculiar conditions of M. Dardenville's will were not unknown to him. Administrators will let secrets slip out, and bankers have peculiar opportunities of becoming possessed of them.

M. Gardette had heard other particulars—that young De Hauteroche had been on a visit to the villa Dardenville for more than a week : of this fact he was quite certain, and no doubt it accounted for him, M. Gardette, not receiving an answer to a communication he had addressed to that gentleman in New Orleans.

I knew well enough to what communication he referred ; and I soon convinced him that it did not account for his not receiving the answer.

All these particulars M. Gardette imparted to me, without any suspicion of the real state of the case ; and, when I told him that M. De Hauteroche had not been on a visit to the Villa Dardenville, he firmly, but politely, contradicted the assertion !

“Pardon me, Monsieur ! I know several who have seen him here, though not in town, for, what was considered strange, he has never made his appearance in our streets during the whole of his stay. It is not so strange, either,” proceeded the banker, with a bland smile. “At such a crisis men care but little for general society. Perhaps,” added the old gentleman, with a knowing look, “he will go more abroad by-and-bye. A lucky young man—a splendid fortune, sir !”

“An unhappy young man, Monsieur Gardette. A sad fortune, I fear—more truly, a terrible misfortune !”

"Why, Monsieur? what mean you?"

"That the person who was on a visit to the Villa Dardonville was not M. De Hauteroche; but, as I have reason to believe, a noted *sportsman*, or rather swindler, who is personating him. M. De Hauteroche has just arrived with me in the *Sultana*. We came direct from New Orleans: out of which city M. De Hauteroche has not been for months past."

Had a bomb-shell dropped into the counting-house of M. Gardette, it could not have startled him more effectually. He leaped from his chair, exclaiming:

"*Sacré Dieu!* Monsieur—you are jesting?"

"Alas! no. Look through the window, M. Gardette—that is Luis De Hauteroche."

The carriage was directly under the window; and Luis and Adele, seated in it, were visible through the half-open venetian.

"Certainly! it is he and his sister! I know them both—pretty children! I knew the old Colonel well. *Mon Dieu!* Monsieur—is what you tell me true?"

"My friends will confirm it!"

"*Pardieu!* I fear it needs no confirmation. Ah! now I comprehend—no answer—the thousand dollar bill—this accounts for it—his staying so closely by the villa—friends not received there—the number of cheques drawn!—*Mon Dieu!* Madame Dardonville is lost—we are all lost!"

"Let us hope not yet. It may still be possible to intercept this villanous adventurer, and frustrate his scheme of infamy?"

"Possible, Monsieur!—no, no—impossible! I can think of no means—how would you act?"

"Follow them, of course?"

"Ah! Monsieur, it is easy to say follow them. The boat

left yesterday. She is a fast boat ; she is the mail-~~packet~~ There is no other for Cincinatti—not one for a week.”

“Are you certain of that ?”

“Quite certain—here is the list.”

The banker pointed to the printed table, that exhibited the days of sailing of the different steam-boats. I had not patience to examine it. His assertion was sufficient to satisfy me : for he had himself a stake in the pursuit—enough to give him an interest in its success.

His information filled me with chagrin. All along I had been planning a mode of procedure ; and I could think of no other, than that of immediately following Despard and his innocent victims. I had calculated on their being detained at Cincinatti : for I had ascertained that the *Missouri Belle* ran no farther. It was not hopeless, therefore, had there been another boat on that day, or the following, or even the third day ; but a week, that would never do. The travellers would easily obtain passage beyond Cincinatti ; the more easily as it was now the season of high water. They would reach Pittsburg or Wheeling ; and from either of these cities the communication with the Atlantic seaboard was constant and daily. In New York lay the Cunard steamer. Her days of sailing were fixed and certain ; but at that moment my mind was in such a turmoil, that I could not calculate with any degree of exactitude, our prospects of reaching her in time. That must be left to a later period.

In spite of the confusion of the moment, an idea had come to my aid : Cincinatti might be reached by horse.

I rapidly communicated this thought to the banker, who, to my satisfaction, did not disapprove of it. It was a long ride, over three hundred miles, the roads heavy ; it would cost much horseflesh. suggested the man of money :

but the circumstances required that some desperate plan must be had recourse to.

De Hauteroche and I could take horse, and ride day and night. Adele could remain at St. Luis. No matter at what cost we travelled, it was the only course to be followed. No other offered a feasible hope.

It was a fortunate circumstance, that just before leaving New Orleans I had had my exchequer replenished; and there would be no obstacle in finding means. The worthy banker, moreover, threw out a hint that he would not hang back; and, furthermore, offered to become the guardian of Adele during our absence. I knew that this would be agreeable both to De Hauteroche and his sister.

All these matters were arranged without communicating with our friends outside. I felt certain that it was the course of action De Hauteroche would take, and I was but preparing the way. It cost only a few minutes to sketch out the programme.

Though suffering under the disappointment occasioned by Madame Dardonville's unexpected absence, and tortured by the mystery of it, my friends were not yet fully awake to its fearful import. It was no longer possible to keep from them the afflicting news. In another minute, and in the privacy of the banker's counting-house, they were made acquainted with all. I need not describe the surprise, the grief, the agony, of both—the furious paroxysm of passion into which Luis was thrown.

The necessity of action, however, at length produced calmness. There was no time to be wasted in idle emotions, and De Hauteroche, entering at once into the design already sketched out, we speedily prepared ourselves to carry it into execution. Adele offered no objection. She saw the necessity of this painful parting—at once from

brother and lover—and she only prayed that we might succeed in the end.

Before the sun had passed his meridian, De Hauteroche and I, mounted on the two toughest steeds the stables of St. Louis could produce, rode off for the ferry wharf. There, crossing the broad river, we entered the territory of Illinois ; and, without pausing a moment, we started forward upon the road that conducts to the distant city of Cincinnati.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PURSUIT.

BUT few words passed between myself and my companion for the first ten miles along the road. He was absorbed in profound melancholy, while I was busied in making certain calculations. We travelled as fast as was safe for our horses ; though far more rapidly than these were accustomed to go. Wherever the road would admit of it, our pace was a gallop ; at other times a gentle canter, or an ambling gait, known throughout the Mississippian States as “pacing.” This, where horses have been trained to it (and most western horses have), is one of the fastest and most convenient gaits for travellers to adopt. Both horse and horseman are less fatigued by it than by either the trot or gallop ; and the speed attained is almost as good as by either.

I had some difficulty in restraining my companion. Still labouring under the excitement produced by the painful discovery, he would have galloped on at top speed, till his horse had broken down under him. I knew that this would be the greatest of misfortunes ; and that, if we had

any chance of reaching Cincinnati as soon as the steamer, an incident of this kind would be certain to destroy it. Should either of our horses give up, from being over-ridden, much time might be lost before we could replace them; and this, perhaps, might occur miles from any town—miles from any stable where it was possible to obtain a remount. Our only hope, therefore, lay in carefully guarding against such a *contretemps*; and economizing the strength of our animals, as far as the necessary rate of speed would allow us.

Of course we had no idea of riding the same horses all the way. That would have been impossible—at all events within the time allowed us for the journey. It was our intention to take the St. Louis horses some sixty miles or so, in fact, to such place as we might obtain a relay, thence to proceed upon fresh ones, sixty or seventy miles further; and so on till we had reached our destination. This sort of journeying would require a liberal outlay; but of that we were not in the mind to care much. The object upon which we were bent rendered such considerations of inferior importance.

I have said that I was engaged in certain calculations. They were rather conjectures as to the probability of our success, though they partook also of the character of the former. Some of my data were exact enough. Others depended only on contingencies, that might or might not turn in our favour. Of one thing, however, I was able to assure both myself and my companion; and that was, that there was still a possibility of our overtaking the adventurer, and if fortune favoured us, a probability of it. I need hardly say how joyed was De Hauteroche by the assurance. Of course it was but my opinion; and I had only arrived at it, after a process of reasoning in which I

had examined the case in all its bearings. Before starting off from St. Louis, we had not allowed time for this. In the confused haste of preparation, we thought only of entering upon the pursuit; and had started blindly forward, without even calculating the chances of success. It would be time enough to think of these upon the road: at all events, it was not before we were fairly on the road, that we found time to talk of them.

One of the data, upon which I relied, was that incidentally furnished me by the pilot of the *Sultana*. He had stated, during our short conversation, that the *Missouri Belle* would reach Cincinnati in less than four days—in all about four days from the time she had taken her departure from St. Louis. M. Gardette had confirmed this statement: it agreed with his own information. About four days was the usual time in making such a journey. The boat had the start of us about three quarters of a day. True she had a longer route to go—by more than a hundred miles—but then her progress would be continuous, night and day, at a speed of at least ten miles an hour; while we must rest and sleep. Could we have ridden three days and nights without stopping, we might have headed her. This, however, was a physical impossibility, or nearly akin to it. I believe my companion would have attempted it, had I not restrained him. I had still hoped that we might arrive in time; and, by making one hundred miles a day, we might calculate on so doing. Three days would thus bring us to Cincinnati; and I knew that the steamer could not arrive before.

It proved a long, hard ride; and, I need scarcely add, that it was not a merry one. It required all my efforts to cheer my companion, who sometimes sank into the most profound melancholy—varied at intervals by a passionate

outburst of anger, as he reflected upon the villanous outrage, of which himself and those he held dearest had been made the victims. There was still hope, however; and that had its effect in restoring his spirits to an occasional calmness.

It was a long, weary ride; and occupied the greater part of both night and day. Many a poor steed was left along our route, with just strength to return to his stable. We scarcely took rest or sleep; but, saddling fresh horses, we pressed on. The road seemed interminable, notwithstanding the rate at which we travelled; and many miles of it we passed over, asleep in our saddles!

Our journey ended at length; but notwithstanding all our exertions, we had not made good our programme. It was the fourth day when we caught sight of the spires of Cincinnati—near the evening. No more weary eyes than ours ever looked upon the walls of a city. But the prospect of success awakened us to fresh energy; and we rode briskly onward and entered the streets.

The "Henry House" was upon our way, and it was the only hotel—at least, the one where such a party would be certain to stop. We halted and made inquiries. They had not been there: though other passengers by the *Missouri Belle* were in the house. The boat, then, had arrived!

We were preparing to hasten on board; but it was not necessary.

"Strangers," said the hotel keeper, pointing to a gentleman who stood near, "if you wish to inquire about any passengers by the *Missouri Belle*, that is the captain himself."

"Yes," freely answered the latter, in reply to our inquiries, "two ladies and a gentleman—Madame Dardon-

ville, of St. Louis—I know the lady—and her daughter. The gentleman I do not know—a young lawyer from New Orleans, I believe.”

“At what hotel have they stopped?”

“Not at any. A Wheeling boat was just going out as we came to the landing; they went by her. They were going East.”

De Hauteroche and I slipped out of our saddles, and walked, or rather trotted into the hotel. The intelligence was terrible, and for the moment unmanned us both. Fortune appeared to be on the side of villany.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DENOUEMENT.

REFRESHED by a draught of wine, I proceeded to prosecute our inquiry. I had not yet lost hope; and with this I succeeded also in cheering my friend. The day was Sunday; and I knew that the Saturday following was the sailing day of the Atlantic steamer. There was then only the Cunard line; and only one steamer every fortnight. Both day and hour were fixed—each alternate Saturday at 12 m.—punctual as the Horse Guards' clock. At both termini of her long ocean-journey was this punctuality observed; and I knew that a gun proclaimed the exact meridional hour of her departure. To reach New York, then, by 12 o'clock on Saturday, was the object to be aimed at. Was it possible of accomplishment?

Inquiry led me to believe that it was; and hope once more supplanted despair in the bosom of De Hauteroche.

Everything depended upon when we could get a boat

to Wheeling: since beyond that the journey would be by stage-coach and rail; and these had fixed and certain arrangements.

When could we start for Wheeling? No one at the hotel could answer this question; and, without loss of time, we proceeded to seek our information at the wharf or landing.

None that day, of course. It was Sunday, and we did not expect it; but we ascertained that a small boat—a very indifferent looking craft—purposed starting for Pittsburg on the morrow. Of course a Pittsburg boat would serve equally well for Wheeling. The hour promised was twelve; and, without further hesitation, we engaged passage.

We needed the refreshment of a hotel; and, having paid our fare, we returned to the Henry House.

Here we were put in possession of a piece of intelligence, unexpected as it was unpleasant. It was to the effect that we need not calculate getting off on the morrow—that there was not the slightest prospect of such a thing; that the captain of the little boat—the *Buckeye*, she was called—was well known to take several days in starting. We might congratulate ourselves if we were off by Wednesday!

There was an air of probability in all this; and our informants had no motive for deceiving us. Certainly it would have given us great uneasiness—in fact, have destroyed our last hope—had it not been for an idea that entered my head at that moment, and promised to get us clear of such a sad dilemma. I had observed, while aboard, that the *Buckeye* was a very humble trader—that the money she received, on account of either freight or passengers during a single trip, could not be a very large

amount; and that a *douceur* of 100 dollars would no doubt fix her hour of sailing—as punctually as the *Cunard* steamer herself.

I communicated my opinion to my friend. He was exactly of the same way of thinking.

The thing was easily arranged. It cost us a second visit to the *Buckeye*; and, before we retired for the night, we felt quite easy in our minds that the little steamer would take us off at the appointed hour.

And she did: having steamed off from the landing on the stroke of 12 m., to the astonishment of all Cincinnati!

Wheeling was reached; and then jolting by stage over the cold mountains to Cumberland, we continued on by rail to Baltimore. Thence without delay to the drab city of Philadelphia; and onward to the metropolis of America. We made no inquiries by the way; we did not stop, except for the hours of the different trains: we had but one object in view—to reach New York by 12 m. on Saturday.

It was Saturday morning when we left Philadelphia. We were in the very train designed to reach New York in time—the express—arranged for the sailing of the European steamer. Thank Heaven, we should be in time!

The Fates once more turned against us. Some accident to the engine, occurring near Trenton, delayed us for half an hour; but this being righted, we pressed forward with accelerated speed.

Many a watch was regarded with anxious eyes—for there were many in the train who proposed crossing the Atlantic—but who can tell the agony experienced at this moment by Luis de Hauteroche? I was myself too troubled to speak.

The feeling at length reached its culminating point. The city of New Jersey was in sight: there lay the *Cunard* steamer at her moorings!

No, she is moving out! See! she has dropped into mid stream! Behold that white puff of smoke! Hark! 'tis the signal gun! She is gone—gone!

No boat may overtake her now—the swiftest would be launched in vain. She will delay for no one—not even for Prince or President. She is the *Cunard* packet. Her laws are immutable—fixed—inexorable. O God! she is gone!

My friend's distress exhibited itself in a frantic manner; but there were others, suffering from far less disappointment, who made equal show of their chagrin. This had the effect of drawing away from us that notice we might otherwise have attracted.

Silent and melancholy we both stood upon the now deserted wharf—gazing upon the black hull, that every minute was growing a more insignificant object to the sight. I shall not attempt to depict the feelings of my companion: I could scarcely analyse my own.

We were turning coldly away to seek some hotel; we had even advanced some paces from the landing, when a singular cry, followed by a confused murmur of voices, as of men in dispute, caused us to look back.

A small knot of sea-faring men stood on a projection of the wharf: they appeared to be employes of the Steam Company; who, after performing the duty of getting the vessel afloat, had lingered to see her out of the bay. One of the men held a telescope levelled to his eye, and directed down the bay: as if following the movements of the steamer. We listened to hear what the men were saying.

"Yes!" exclaimed the man with the telescope, "I told you so—something wrong yonder."

"Give me the glass, old fellow!" demanded one of his comrades—a rough-looking sailor.

"Yes, give it to Brace, Bill—he's got a long sight."

The man surrendered the glass, as requested; and Brace, placing it to his eye, looked silently and steadily through it. I could have heard my companion's heart beating, had it not been for the thumping of my own. How eagerly we waited for the words of Brace! They came at length—words of gold!

"Ye be right, Bill—there ur somethin' wrong—there's a paddle broke—I sees 'em on the wheel-house—yes, that's it."

"They'll put back again!" suggested one.

"Sartin to do," drawled Brace, "they are putting back—they're getting the cripple round now as fast as she can come. Now she comes this way. Make ready your ropes, boys—more grog, and plenty o' keelhaulin'!"

The reaction of feeling produced by these words, in the minds of my companion and myself, cannot be described; and it was sustained by the evidence of our own eyes—for, the moment after, we could make out that it was the steamer's head that was towards us, and that she was slowly but certainly making up the bay—back to the landing from which she had just taken her departure.

There was something almost astounding in this occurrence. It seemed as if Providence itself had a hand in the event.

We did not allow our excited feelings to hinder us from taking some cautionary steps necessary to the carrying out of our design. There was time enough for us to reach the

office of the nearest justice, and arm ourselves with the authority for an arrest ; and, before the steamer had reached the wharf, we were on the spot with two plain-clothes policemen, anxious for action. They scented large game, and consequently a rich reward.

They had soon an opportunity of earning it ; for, in a few minutes after, we were aboard, and M. Jacques Despard was in handcuffs !

I was glad that we alighted upon him alone—as it saved a painful scene. The ladies were in their state-room ; and know nothing of the arrest, till after their travelling companion had been carried over the side of the ship !

There was a scene notwithstanding—a scene of surprise and confusion ; but explanations followed fast ; and the scene ended by all who took part in it becoming imbued with one common feeling—that sense of supreme joy, which one experiences who has just narrowly escaped from some terrible danger.

As yet no injury had accrued. How near all had been to utter ruin !

* * * * *

Of course the passage money was freely forfeited to Messrs. Cunard Co. ; and the family luggage transferred from the steamer to a Broadway hotel.

After a short stay there, another steamer that plies between New York and New Orleans, carried us directly to the latter city—where M. Gardette was good enough to meet us, and deliver up his temporary ward.

Long ere this we had learnt the details of the Despard infamy. They differed, in no essential particular, from what conjecture had suggested to us.

It appeared that it was not the first time Despard had personated young De Hauteroche, to his own advantage,

and the latter's disgrace. He was well aware of the remarkable likeness between them ; and with this, as an aid to his swindling designs, he acted with a certainty of success. He had taken pains to possess himself of such points in the family history as were accessible to his inquiries ; and it was while prosecuting this branch of his *industrie*, that the letters had fallen into his hands. Of the use he made of them we know most of the details. As already conjectured, he had started for St. Louis, on gaining possession of the will and the letter which accompanied it ; and, as neither Madame Dardonville nor Olympe had seen Luis de Hauteroche for a considerable period of time, the deception was easy enough. The voyage to France was a deep laid scheme ; and the circular letter for 10,000 dollars on a Paris Bank was a bold stroke of swindling. Once there, the villain expected to be the recipient of that money. The plea for the journey was not without plausibility. The St. Louis rumour was correct : a dead uncle's property left to the De Hauteroches—a legacy that required to be claimed immediately. Another inducement : his sister Adele and the young Englishman were to meet him there—in Paris. The Englishman was married to Adele, and preferred returning to Europe by the West India steamer ! Such had been his story.

The hasty marriage somewhat surprised Madame Dardonville, as well as the design of the European convention. She regarded it as somewhat eccentric ; but Luis De Hauteroche was to her, nearest and dearest, and how could she refuse compliance with his proposal ? In fine, she made her arrangements, and set forth.

Nothing had been said of the marriage between Luis and Olympe. That was tacitly left for future arrangement. Paris would be the place—if it should ever come off.

It was doubtful, however, whether it ever would have taken place—even if the steamer had held on her way. Both Madame Dardonville and her daughter had conceived strange imaginings about the projected son-in-law. Something had occurred every day—almost every hour—to excite surprise—even a little *dégoût*. Luis De Hauteroche had much changed—for the worse—had become dissipated, vulgarized—in short, anything but what should have been expected in the son of his father. It was a disappointment—a chagrin.

Poor Luis! Had the steamer gone on, he might have lost part of the fortune, but he was in little danger of losing his wife. Olympe would undoubtedly have forfeited the legacy rather than have yielded herself up to the vulgar counterfeit.

* * * * *

I saw Despard once afterwards—while on a visit to the Louisiana State Prison at Bayou Sara. With his little pile of picked cotton before him, he looked a sorry enough sort of wretch—far different from the ruffled *élégant* of other days. The forgery had been proved home, and entitled him to his present residence for a lease of not less than ten years!

How very different appeared his counterpart when I last saw him, elegantly attired, living in an elegant mansion with elegant furniture, and waited on by a troop of willing domestics!

And she who gave him all this was by his side—his blooming bride—the lovely Olympe.

THE WILL.

CHAPTER I.

The Tenor of the Will, and a Dialogue between the Candidates.

MR. PEARSON, a wealthy Lincolnshire farmer, who had always been esteemed a prudent, sensible man, though something of a *humorist*, made the following will :—

“I, John Pearson, of *The Wold* in Lincolnshire, farmer, being of sound mind and body, do make this my last will and testament, &c. &c.

“I give and bequeath my farm of West Wold-land to my eldest nephew, Grimes Goodenough ; my farm of Holland-fen to my dear nephew, John Wright ; and my farm of Clover-hill to my youngest nephew Pierce Marvel.

“I further will and desire that the sum of ten thousand pounds, which is now in the hands William Constantine, gentleman, my executor, may by him, immediately after my decease, be put out to interest for ten years ; and I will and desire that, at the end of the said ten years, the said sum of ten thousand pounds, and the interest so accumulated thereon, be given to whichever of my aforesaid nephews shall at that time be the richest.

“And I trust that the said William Constantine, gentleman, my executor and very good friend, being a clear-headed, honest man, will understand and execute this my last will and testament, according to the plain meaning of my words ; though it should happen that this my will should not be drawn up in due legal form, of which I know little or nothing.”

Mr. Constantine, the executor, being, as described, a clear-headed, honest man, found no difficulty either in understanding or executing his trust : the ten thousand pounds, immediately upon Pearson's decease, were placed out upon interest ; and the three nephews were put into possession of their farms.

These were of very different value. Goodenough's wanted improvement, but would pay richly for any that should be

judiciously made. Wright's farm was by far the worst of the three; and Marvel's the best.

The Lincolnshire folks were much divided in opinion concerning these young men; and many bets were laid relating to the legacy. People judged according to their own characters; the enterprising declared for Marvel, the prudent for Wright, the timid for Goodenough.

The nephews had scarcely been in possession of their farms a week, when one evening, as they were all supping together at Wright's house, Marvel suddenly turned to Goodenough, and exclaimed—

"When do you begin your improvements, Cousin Goodenough?"

"Never, Cousin Marvel."

"Then you'll never touch the ten thousand, my boy. What! will you do nothing to your marsh? Nothing to your common? Nothing to your plantations? Do not you mean ever to make any improvements?"

"I mean not to make any improvements."

"Well, you'll let me make some for you."

"Not I."

"No! Won't you let me cut down some of those trees for you, that are spoiling one another in your wood?"

"Not a tree shall be cut down. Not a stick shall be stirred. Not a change shall be made, I say."

"Not a change for the better, Cousin Goodenough?" said Wright.

"No change can be for the better to my mind; I shall plough and sow and reap as our forefathers did, and that's enough for me."

"What, will you not even try the new plough?" said Marvel.

"Not I: no new ploughs for me. No plough can be so good as the old one."

"How do you know, as you never tried it or would see it tried?" said Wright: "I find it better than the old one."

"No matter; the old one will do well enough for me, as it did for my father before me."

After having repeated these words in precisely the same tone several times, he went on slowly eating his supper, whilst Marvel, in detestation of his obstinate stupidity, turned his back upon him, and began to enumerate to Wright sundry of his own ingenious projects.

"My dear Wright," said he, "you are worth talking to, and you shall hear all my schemes."

"Willingly, but I do not promise to approve of them all."

"Oh! you will, you will, the moment you hear them; and I will let you have a share in some of them. In the first place, there's that fine rabbit-warren near Clover-hill. The true silver-grey rabbits, *silver-sprigs* they call them. Do you know that the skins of those *silver-sprigs* are worth any money?"

"Any money! What money?"

"Pooh, I don't know exactly; but I mean to buy that warren."

"Before you know what it is worth! Let us consider; each dozen of skins is worth, say, from ten to fifteen shillings."

"You need not trouble yourself to calculate now," interrupted Marvel, "for I have determined to have the warren. With the money that I shall get for my silver-sprigs, I will next year make a decoy, and supply the London market with wild fowl. Don't you remember, the day that we met Simon Stubbs, the carrier, loaded with game and wild fowl, he said that a decoy in Lincolnshire *must* be a fortune to any man? I'll have the best decoy not only in Lincolnshire, but in all England. By the bye, there's another thing I must do, Wright; I'll exchange any part of Clover-hill you please with you, for as much land in Holland-fen."

"Take him at his word, Cousin Wright," said Goodenough.

"No, no," replied Wright, "I know the value of land, and the difference between Clover-hill and Holland-fen, better than he does; I would not take him at his word, for that would be taking him in."

"I would take nobody in," said Goodenough, "but if another man is a fool, that's no reason I should be one. Now, if a man offers me a good bargain, why should I not close with him and say,—Done?"

"Then say done," cried Marvel, "and you shall have the bargain, Goodenough. You have an undrained marsh of your own: I'll exchange with you, and welcome, ten acres of the marsh for five of Clover-hill."

"Done," said Goodenough.

"Done. I shall stock it with geese, and you'll see what the quills and feathers alone will bring me in. I've engaged with one already to sell them for me. But, Wright, here's another scheme I have. Wildmore common, you know, is covered with those huge thistles, which prick the noses of the sheep so as to hinder them from feeding and fattening; I will take that common into my own hands."

"Ay," said Goodenough: "exchange the rest of Clover-hill for it:—that's like you!"

"And I will mow the thistles," pursued Marvel, without deigning to reply to Goodenough. "I will mow the thistles; their down I can contrive to work up into cotton, and the stalks into cordage: and with the profit I shall make of these thistles, and of my decoy, and of my goose-quills and feathers, and of my silver-sprig rabbits, I will buy jackets for my sheep; for my sheep shall all have jackets after shearing. Why should not Lincolnshire sheep, if they have jackets, become as valuable as the Leicestershire breed? You'll see my sheep will be the finest in the whole county; and with the profit I shall make of them, I will set up a fishery in fen-lake: and with the profits of the fishery—now comes my grand scheme—I shall be the richest of you all; with the profits of the fishery, and the decoy, and the sheep, and the silver-sprigs, and the quills and feathers, and geese and thistles, I will purchase that fine heronry, near Spalding."

At these words, Goodenough laid down his knife and fork; and sticking his arms akimbo, laughed contemptuously, if not heartily.

"So, then, the end of all this turmoil is to purchase a heronry! Much good may it do you, Cousin Marvel. You understand your own affairs best; you will make great *improvements*, I grant, and no doubt will be the richest of us all. The ten thousand pounds will be yours for certain; for, as we all know, Cousin Marvel, you are a genius!—But why a genius should set his fancy upon a heronry, of all things in this mortal world, is more than I can pretend to tell; being no genius myself."

"Look here, Wright," continued Marvel, still without vouchsafing any direct reply to Goodenough; "here's a description, in this last newspaper, of the fine present that the Grand Seignior has made to his Majesty. The plume of herons' feathers alone is estimated at a thousand guineas! Think of what I shall make by my heronry! At the end of ten years, I shall be so rich that it will hardly be worth my while," said Marvel, laughing, "to accept of my uncle's legacy. I will give it to you, Wright, for you are a generous fellow, and I am sure you will deserve it."

CHAPTER II.

Hasty Conclusions are but seldom just.

IN return for this liberal promise, Wright endeavoured to convince Marvel, that if he attempted such a variety of schemes at once, they would probably all fail; and that to insure success,

it would be necessary to calculate, and to make himself master of the business, before he should undertake to conduct it. Marvel, however, was of too sanguine and presumptuous a temper to listen to this sage advice: he was piqued by the sneers of his cousin Goodenough, and determined to prove the superiority of his own spirit and intellect. He plunged at once into the midst of a business which he did not understand. He took a rabbit-warren, of two hundred and fifty acres, into his hands; stocked ten acres of marsh-land with geese; and exchanged some of the best part of Clover-hill for a share in a common covered with thistles. He planted a considerable tract of land, with a degree of expedition that astonished all the neighbourhood; but it was remarked that the fences were not quite sufficient, especially as the young trees were in a dangerous situation, being surrounded by land stocked with sheep and horned cattle. Wright warned him of the danger; but he had not time this year, he said, to complete the fences: the men who tended his sheep might easily keep them from the plantation for this season, and the next spring he proposed to dig such a ditch round the whole as should secure it for ever. He was now extremely busy, making jackets for his sheep, providing willows for his decoy, and gorse and corn for his geese. The geese, of which he had a prodigious flock, were not yet turned into their fen, because a new scheme had occurred to Marvel relative to some reeds with which a part of this fen was covered. On these reeds myriads of starlings were accustomed to roost, who broke them down with their weight. Now, Marvel knew that such reeds would be valuable for thatching, and with this view he determined to drive away the starlings; but the measures necessary for this purpose would frighten his friends, the geese, and therefore he was obliged to protect and feed them in his farm-yard, at a considerable expense, whilst he was carrying on the war with the starlings. He fired guns at them, morning and evening; he sent up rockets and kites with fiery tails; and at last he banished them: but half his geese in the mean time died for want of food; and the women and children who plucked them stole one-quarter of the feathers and one-half of the quills, whilst Marvel was absent letting up rockets in the fen.

The rabbit-warren was, however, to make up for all other losses. A furrier had engaged to take as many silver-sprigs from him as he pleased, at sixteen shillings a dozen, provided he should send them properly dressed, and in time to be shipped for China, where these silver-grey rabbit-skins sold to the best advantage:

As winter came on, it was necessary to supply the warren with winter food ; and Marvel was much astonished at the multitude of unforeseen expenses into which his rabbits led him. The banks of the warren wanted repair, and the warren's house was not habitable in bad weather: these appeared but slight circumstances when Marvel made the purchase ; but, alas ! he had reason to change his opinion in the course of a few months. The first week in November there was a heavy fall of snow ; and the warren walls should have been immediately cleared of snow, to have kept the rabbits within their bounds ; but Marvel happened this week to be on a visit in Yorkshire, and he was *obliged* to leave the care of the warren entirely to the warrenier, who was *obliged* to quit his house during the snow, and to take shelter with a neighbour. He neglected to clear the walls ; and Marvel, upon his return home, found that his silver-sprigs had strayed into a neighbouring warren. The second week in November is the time when the rabbits are usually killed, as the skins are then in full prime. It was in vain that Marvel raised a hue and cry after his silver-sprigs : a fortnight passed away before one-third of them could be recovered. The season was lost, and the furrier sued him for breach of contract ; and, what was worse, Goodenough laughed at his misfortunes. The next year he expected to retrieve his loss : he repaired the warrenier's house, new-faced the banks, and capped them with furze ; but the common grey rabbit had been introduced into the warren by the stragglers of the preceding year ; and as these grey rabbits are of a much more hardy race than the silver-sprigs, they soon obtained and kept possession of the land. Marvel now pronounced rabbits to be the most useless and vexatious animals upon earth, and in one quarter of an hour thoroughly convinced himself that tillage was far more profitable than rabbits. He ploughed up his warren, and sowed it with corn ; but unluckily his attention had been so much taken up by the fishery, the decoy, the geese, the thistles, and the hopes of the heronry, that he totally forgot his intention of making the best of all possible ditches round his plantation. When he went to visit this plantation, he beheld a miserable spectacle : the rabbits which had strayed beyond their bounds during the great snow, and those which had been hunted from their burrows when the warren was ploughed up, had all taken shelter in this spot ; and these refugees supported themselves for some months upon the bark and roots of the finest young trees.

Marvel's loss was great, but his mortification still greater, for

his cousin Goodenough laughed at him without mercy. Something must be done, he saw, to retrieve his credit; and the heronry was his resource.

"What will signify a few trees, more or less," thought he, "or the loss of a few silver-sprigs, or the death of a few geese, or the waste of a few quills and feathers? My sheep will sell well—my thistles will bring me up again; and as soon as I have sold my sheep at Partney fair, and manufactured my thistles, I will set out, with my money in my pocket, for Spalding, and make my bargain for the heronry. A plume of heron's feathers is worth a thousand guineas! My fortune will be made when I get possession of the Spalding heronry."

So intent was Marvel upon the thoughts of the Spalding heronry, that he neglected everything else. About a week before the fair of Partney, he bethought himself of his sheep, which he had left to the care of a shepherd-boy. He now ordered the boy to drive them home, that he might see them. Their jackets hung upon them like bags; the poor animals had fallen away in the most deplorable manner. Marvel could scarcely believe that these were his sheep, or that these were the sheep which he had expected to be the pride of Lincolnshire, and which he had hoped would set the fashion of jackets. Behold, they were dying of the rot.

"What an unfortunate man I am!" exclaimed Marvel, turning to his cousin Wright, whom he had summoned along with Goodenough, in the pride of his heart to view, value, and admire his sheep. "All your sheep, Wright, are fat and sound; mine were finer than yours when I bought them. How comes it that I am so unlucky?"

"Jack of all trades, and master of none!" said Goodenough, with a sneer.

"You forgot, I am afraid, what I told you, when first you bought these sheep," said Wright, "that you should always keep them in fold every morning till the dew was off: if you had done so, they would now be as well and thriving as mine. Do you not remember my telling you that?"

"Yes; and I charged this boy always to keep them in fold till the dew was off," replied Marvel, turning with an angry countenance to the shepherd-boy.

"I never heard nothing of it till this minute, I am sure, master," said the boy.

Marvel now recollected that, at the very moment when he was going to give this order to the boy, his attention had been

drawn away by the sight of a new decoy in the fields adjoining to his sheep pasture. In his haste to examine the decoy, he forgot to give that order to his shepherd, on which the safety of his fine flock of sheep depended.* Such are the negligences and blunders of those who endeavour to do half a dozen things at once.

CHAPTER III.

Successive Disappointments are consoled by successive Hopes.

THE failure of one undertaking never discouraged Marvel from beginning another; and it was a pity that, with so much spirit and activity, he had so little steadiness and prudence. His sheep died; and he set out for Spalding full of the thoughts of the heronry. Now this heronry belonged to Sir Plantagenet Mowbray, an elderly gentleman, who was almost distracted with family pride: he valued himself upon never having parted with one inch of the landed property that had descended to him through a long line of ancestors, from the Plantagenets. He looked down upon the whole race of farmers and traders as beings of a different species from himself; and the indignation with which he heard, from a Lincolnshire farmer, a proposal to purchase his heronry, may perhaps be imagined, but cannot be described. It was in vain that Marvel rose in his offers: it was in vain that he declared he was ready to give any price that Sir Plantagenet would set upon the heronry. Sir Plantagenet sent word by his steward that not a feather of his birds should be touched; that he was astonished at the insolence of such a proposal: and that he advised Marvel to keep out of the way of *his people*, lest they should revenge the insult that had been offered to their master.

This haughty answer, and the disappointment of all his hopes and schemes respecting the heronry, threw Marvel into a degree of rage scarcely inferior to what was felt by Sir Plantagenet. As he was galloping down the avenue from Plantagenet Hall, he

* A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln, p. 330. "It well deserves noting that a shepherd, who, when young, was shepherd's boy to an old man, who lived at Netlam, near Lincoln, a place famous for the rot, told Mr. Neve that he was persuaded sheep took the rot only of a morning, before the dew was well off. At that time they folded, being open field; his master's shepherd kept his flock in fold always till the dew was gone, and, with no other attention, his sheep were kept sound, when all the neighbours lost their flocks.

overtook a young man, of a shabby appearance, who was mounted upon a very fine horse. At first Marvel took it for granted that he was one of Sir Plantagenet's *people*, and he was riding past him, when he heard the stranger say, in a friendly tone, "Your horse gallops well, sir; but have a care—there's a carrion a little way farther on that may startle him."

Marvel pulled in his horse. The stranger rode up beside him, and they entered into conversation. "That carrion, sir," said he, pointing to the dead horse, which had just been shot for the hounds of the baronet's son,—“that carrion, sir, was, in my opinion, the best horse possessed either by Sir Plantagenet or his son. 'Tis a shame for any man who pretends to be a gentleman, and who talks so largely and so high of his family, should be so stingy in the article of horseflesh."

Marvel was not unwilling at this instant to hear the haughty baronet blamed and ridiculed; and his companion exactly fell in with his humour, by telling a variety of anecdotes to prove Sir Plantagenet to be everything that was odious and contemptible. The history of his insolence about the heronry was now related by Marvel; and the stranger seemed to sympathize so much in his feelings, that from a stranger he began to consider him as a friend. Insensibly the conversation returned to the point at which it commenced; and his new friend observed that it was in vain to expect anything good from any gentleman, or indeed from any man, who was stingy in the article of horseflesh.

A new sense of honour and of shame began to rise in our hero's mind; and he sat uneasy in his saddle, whilst he reflected that the horse upon which he was mounted was perhaps as deservedly an object of contempt as any of Sir Plantagenet's stud. His new friend, without seeming to notice his embarrassment, continued his conversation; and drew a tempting picture of the pleasures and glories of a horse-race. He said, "he was just training a horse for the York races, and a finer animal never was crossed. Sir Plantagenet's eldest son would have been the proudest and happiest of men, if his father would but have bought the horse for him: but he had refused, and the youth himself had not the price, or half the price, at his command."

Our hero was no judge of horses, but he was ambitious to prove that his spirit was superior to that of the haughty baronet; and that something good might be expected from him, as he was not stingy in horse-flesh. Besides, he was worked up to a high degree of curiosity to see the York races; and his companion assured him that he could not appear there without being well

mounted. In short, the hour was not at an end before he had offered a hundred guineas for the finest horse that ever was crossed. He was charmed with the idea that he should meet Sir Plantagenet Mowbray's son and heir at the York races, and should show him that he was able and willing to pay for the horse which his arrogant father could not afford to purchase.

From the anecdote of the heronry, his companion perceived that Marvel was a man fond of projects; and he proposed to him a scheme, which caught his fancy so much that it consoled him for the loss of the heronry. It was the fault of our enterprising hero's character always to think the last scheme for making a fortune the best. As soon as he reached home he was in haste to abandon some of his old projects, which now appeared to him flat, stale, and unprofitable. About a score of his flock, though tainted with the rot, were not yet dead; he was eager to sell them, but no one would buy sheep of such a wretched appearance. At last Wright took them off his hands. "I will throw the threescore jackets into the bargain," said Marvel; "for you are a generous fellow, to offer so handsomely for my poor sheep, and you deserve to be treated as you treat others. If I come in at the end of the ten years for the legacy, I shall remember you, as I told you before. As to my cousin Goodenough here, he thinks so much of himself, that there is no occasion for others to think of him. I asked him to join me in a bond yesterday for a hundred pounds, just to try him, and he refused me. When I come in for the legacy I will cut him off with a shilling,—I give him fair notice."

"Cut me off with what you will," said Goodenough, sullenly: "not a farthing of my money shall ever be lent to one that has a project for every day in the year. Get into what difficulties you may, I will never join you in any bond, I promise you. It is enough for me to take care of myself."

"Don't flatter yourself that I am getting into any difficulties," replied Marvel. "I wanted the hundred guineas only to pay for a horse; and the friend who sold him to me will wait my convenience."

"The friend?" said Wright; "do you mean that man who rode home with you from Spalding?—I advise you not to make a friend of him, for he is a notorious jockey."

"He will not take *me* in though," said Marvel: "I am as sharp as he is, and he sees that: so we understand one another very well. To my certain knowledge, a hundred and twenty guineas could be had to-morrow for the horse I bought from him; yet he let me have him for a hundred."

"And how can a man of your sense, Cousin Marvel," said

Wright, "believe that a person who never saw you till within these three days would be so much your friend as to make you a present of twenty guineas?"

"A present!"

"Yes: if he lets you have a horse for a hundred, which you can sell for a hundred and twenty, does not he make you a present of twenty guineas?"

"Well, but I can tell you the reason for all that: he wants me to enter into a scheme with him for breeding horses on the commons here; and so he would not, at first setting out, stand to higgie with me for the price of a horse."

"And would you for twenty guineas, Cousin Marvel, run the hazard of joining in any scheme with a man of his character? Pray inquire in the country, and in York, where you are going, what sort of a character this man bears. Take my advice, pay him for his horse, and have nothing more to do with him."

"But I have not the ready cash to pay him for his horse," said Marvel.

"Let that be no difficulty," replied Wright; "for I have a hundred guineas here, just brought home from Partney fair, and they are heartily at your service."

Goodenough twitched Wright's elbow three times as he uttered these words; but Wright finished his sentence, and put the money into Marvel's hands immediately, upon his promising to pay for the horse, break off all connection with his friend the jockey, if he should find, upon inquiry, that he was not a person of good character; and at all events to suspend any treaty with him till after his return from York.

"Whilst you are gone," said Wright, "I will make inquiries about the profit of breeding of horses on the commons. I have an acquaintance, a sensible old man, who has kept accounts of what he has done in that way himself; and he will show us his accounts, from which we shall be able to judge."

Marvel acknowledged the good sense of this advice, and set out the next morning for York races.

CHAPTER IV.

He is fortunate whose Friend is a Man of sound Understanding.

WRIGHT heard nothing more of Marvel for about a fortnight, when he received the following letter:—

"DEAR COUSIN WRIGHT,—It is a very great pity that you could not be persuaded to come along with me to York races, where I have seen more of life and of the world in a week than ever I did in all my life before. York is a surprising fine town; and has a handsome cathedral and assembly-room: but I am not in the humour, just now, to describe them; so I shall proceed to what is much better worth thinking of.

"You must know, Cousin Wright, that I am in love, and never was I so happy or so miserable in my days. If I was not a farmer there would be some hopes for me; but, to be sure, it is not to be expected that such a lady as she is should think of a mere country booby; in which light, indeed, she was pleased to say, as I heard from good authority, she did not consider me, though my manners wanted polish. These were her own words. I shall spare nothing to please her, if possible, and am not wholly without hope, though I have a powerful rival; no less a person than the eldest son and heir of Sir Plantagenet Mowbray, Bart. But her virtue will never, I am persuaded, suffer her to listen to such addresses as his. Now, mine are honourable and pure as her soul, the purity of which no one could doubt who had seen her last night, as I did, in the character of the *Fair Penitent*. She was universally admired; and another night sung and danced like an angel. But I can give you no idea of her by pen and ink; so I beseech you to come and see her, and give your advice to me candidly, for I have the highest opinion of your judgment and good-nature.

"I find you were quite right about that scoundrel who rode with me from Spalding! He has arrested me for one hundred guineas: and is, without exception, the shabbiest dog I ever met with: but I am out of his clutches, and have better friends. I will tell you the whole story when we meet, and pay you your hundred with many thanks. Pray set out as soon as you receive this, for every moment is an age to me; and I won't declare myself, more than I have done, if possible, till you come; for I have a great opinion of your judgment: yet hope you won't put on your severe face, nor be prejudiced against her because of her being on the stage. Leave such illiberality to Cousin Goodenough: it would be quite beneath you! Pray bring with you that volume of old plays that is at the top of my bed, under the bag of thistles; or in the basket of reeds that I was making; or in the out-house, where I keep the goose quills and feathers. I don't find my memory so clear, since my head is so full of this charming Alicia Barton.

"Pray make no delay, as you value the peace of mind of your affectionate cousin and friend,

"PIERCE MARVEL.

"P.S.—Mr. Barton, her brother, is the most generous of men, and the cleverest. He is not averse to the match. Sir Plantagenet Mowbray's son and heir, who is as insolent as his father, may find that a Lincolnshire farmer is not a person to be despised. I have thoughts of selling my farm of Clover-hill, and of going into another way of life; for which, as Mr. Barton said, and Alicia hinted, nay, and as I am inclined to believe too, I am much better suited than for farming. Of this, more when we meet. Pray set out as soon as you receive this. Alicia has dark eyes, and yet a fair complexion. I am sure you will like her."

Far from feeling sure that he should like Miss Alicia Barton, Wright was so much alarmed for his cousin, on the perusal of this letter, that he resolved to set out immediately for York, lest the sale of Clover-hill should be concluded before his arrival. A new project, and a new love, were, indeed, powerful temptations to one of Marvel's character.

As Goodenough was plodding at his accustomed pace to his morning's work, he met Wright on horseback, who asked him if he had any commissions that he could execute in York, whither he was going.

"None, thank Heaven," said Goodenough. "So, I see it is as I always knew it would be! Marvel is 'ticing you into his own ways, and will make you just such another as *his* self. Ay, you must go to York races! Well, so much the better for me. Much pleasure to you at the races."

"I am not going to the races; I am going to do Marvel a service."

"Charity begins at home: that's my maxim," replied Goodenough.

"It is quite fitting that charity should *begin* at home," said Wright, "but then it should not *end* at home; for those that help nobody will find none to help them, in time of need."

"Those that help nobody will not be so apt to come to need," replied Goodenough. "But yonder's my men standing idle. If I but turn my head, that's the way of 'em. Good-morrow to you, Cousin Wright. I can't stand argufying here about charity, which won't plough my ground, nor bring me a jot nearer to the thousand pounds legacy: so good-morrow to you. My service to Cousin Marvel."

Goodenough proceeded to his men, who were, in truth, standing idle, as it was their custom to do when the master's eye was not, as they thought, upon them; for he kept them so hard at work when he was present, that not a labouring man in the county would hire himself to Goodenough when he could get employment elsewhere. Goodenough's partisans, however, observed that he got his money's worth out of every man he employed, and that this was the way to grow rich. The question, said they, is not which will be the best beloved of the three nephews, but which will be the richest at the end of ten years, and on this ground who can dispute that Goodenough's maxim is the best, "Charity begins at home"?

Wright's friends looked rather alarmed when they heard of this journey to York, and Marvel's advocates, though they put a good face upon the matter, heartily wished him safe home from York races.

Upon Wright's arrival in York, he found it no easy matter to discover his cousin Marvel, for he had forgotten to date his letter, and no direction was given to inn or lodging. At last, after inquiring at all the public-houses without success, Wright be-

thought himself of asking where Miss Alicia Barton, the actress, lodged, for there he would probably meet her lover. Mr. Harrison, an eminent dyer, to whom he applied for information, very civilly offered to show him to the house. Wright had gained this dyer's good opinion by the punctuality with which he had, for three years past, supplied him, at the day and hour appointed, with the quantity of wood for which he had agreed. Punctuality never fails to gain the good opinion of men of business.

As the dyer walked with Wright to Miss Barton's lodgings, they entered into conversation about her, and Wright asked what character she bore.

"I know nothing of her character for my own share," said Harrison, "not being in that line of business; but I think I could put you in a way of seeing her in her true colours, whatever they may be, for she is very intimate with a milliner, whom my wife visits, though not entirely with my good-will. In return for which, I shall be glad if you will do my business along with your own, and let me know if anything is going wrong."

The dyer introduced Wright to the milliner as a gentleman farmer, who wanted to take home with him a fashionable cap, and bonnet or two for some ladies in Lincolnshire. The milliner ordered down some dusty band-boxes, which she protested and vowed had just arrived from London with the newest fashions; and whilst she was displaying these, Wright talked of the races, and the players, and Miss Alicia Barton.

"Is she as handsome as they say? I have a huge *curiosity* to see her," said Wright, feigning more rusticity of manner and more simplicity than was natural to him. "I have truly a wounded *curiosity* to see her; I've heard so much of her, even down in Lincolnshire."

"If you go to see the play, sir, you can't fail to have your curiosity gratified, for Miss Barton plays to-night—(Jenny! reach me a play-bill)—for her own benefit, and appears in her very best character—the Romp."

"The Romp! Odds! Is that her best character? Why now, to my notion, bad's the best, if that be the best of her characters, The Romp! Odds so! What would our grandmothers say to that?"

"Oh, sir, times are changed, as well as fashions, since our grandmothers' days," said the milliner. "Put up this bonnet for the gentleman, Jenny. I am sure I don't pretend to say

anything in favour of the times, whatever I may of the fashions. But, as to fashion, to be sure no one can be more fashionable here in York than Miss Barton. All our gentlemen are dying for her."

"Odds my life!" cried Wright, "I'll keep out of her way. And yet I've a huge curiosity to set my eyes upon her. Pray, now, could I any way get to the sight or speech of her in a room or so? for seeing a woman on the stage is one thing, and seeing her off, as I take it, is another."

"I take it so too, sir. Jenny, put up the cap for the gentleman, and make out a bill."

"No, no; the bonnet's all I want, which I'll pay for on the nail."

Wright took out a long purse full of guineas, then put it up again, and opened a pocket-book full of bank-notes. The milliner's respect for him obviously increased. "Jenny! do run and see who's within there. Miss Barton was trying on her dress, I think, half an hour ago; maybe, she'll pass through this way, and the gentleman may have a sight of her, since it weighs so much upon his mind. Let me put up the cap, too, sir; it's quite the fashion, you may assure the Lincolnshire ladies. Oh, here's Miss Barton."

Miss Barton made her appearance, with all her most bewitching smiles and graces. Without seeming to notice Wright, she seated herself in a charming attitude, and, leaning pensively on the counter, addressed her conversation to her friend, the milliner; but at every convenient pause, she cast an inquiring glance at Wright, who stood with his long purse of guineas in his hand, and his open pocket-book of bank-notes before him, as if he had been so much astounded by the lady's appearance that he could not recover his recollection.

Now Wright was a remarkably well-shaped handsome man, and Miss Barton was in reality as much struck with his appearance as he feigned to be by hers. No forbidding reserve condemned him to silence, and, as if inspired by the hope of pleasing, he soon grew talkative.

"This is the most rare town—this, your town of York," said he; "I do not well know how I shall ever be able to get myself out of it. So many, many fine sights, my eyes be quite dazzled!"

"And pray, sir, which of all the fine sights do you like the best?" said the milliner.

"Oh, the ladies be the finest of all the fine sights, and I

know whom I think the finest lady I ever beheld, but will never tell—never.”

“Never, sir?” said the milliner, whilst Miss Barton modestly cast down her eyes. “Never’s a bold word, sir. I’ve a notion you’ll live to break that rash resolution.”

Miss Barton sighed, and involuntarily looked at the glass.

“Why, where’s the use,” pursued Wright, “of being laughed at? Where’s the sense of being scoffed at, as a man might be, that would go for to pay a compliment, not well knowing how, to a lady that is used to have court made to her by the first gentlemen in all York?”

“Those that think they don’t know how to pay a compliment, often pay the best, to my fancy,” said the milliner. “What says Miss Barton?”

Miss Barton sighed and blushed, or looked as if she meant to blush; and then, raising her well-practised eyes, exclaimed, with theatrical tones and gestures:—

“Ye sacred powers, whose gracious providence
Is watchful for our good, guard me from men,
From their deceitful tongues, their vows, and flatteries;
Still let me pass neglected by their eyes;
Let my bloom wither, and my form decay,
That none may think it worth their while to ruin me,
And fatal love may never be my bane.”

Scarcely had she concluded her speech, when Pierce Marvel came breathless into the shop. Wright was standing so as to be completely hidden by the door, and Marvel, not seeing his friend, addressed himself, as soon as he had breath, to his mistress. The lady’s manner immediately changed, and Wright had an opportunity of seeing and admiring her powers of acting. To Marvel, she was coy and disdainful.

“I expect my friend and relation in town every hour,” said he to her in a low voice, “and then I shall be able to settle with your brother about the sale of Clover-hill. You half promised that you would walk with me this morning.”

“Not without my brother. Excuse me, sir,” said the coy lady, withdrawing with the dignity of a princess. “When your friend arrives, for whose advice I presume you wait, you will be able to decide *your* heart. Mine cannot be influenced by base lucre, or mercenary considerations. Unhand me, sir.”

“I will run immediately to the inn, to see whether my friend is come,” cried Marvel. “Believe me, I am as much above mercenary considerations as yourself, but I have promised not to

conclude upon the sale till he comes, and he would take it ill to be sent for and then to be made a fool of. I'll run to the 'Green Man' again immediately, to see if he is come."

CHAPTER V.

"Warm Feelings and Cool Discretion are sometimes, though rarely, allied.

MARVEL darted out of the shop. Wright, during this parley, which lasted but a few seconds, had kept himself snug in his hiding-place, and appeared to the milliner to be wholly absorbed in casting up his bill, in which there was a shilling wrong. He came from behind the door as soon as Marvel departed; and saying that he would call for his purchases in an hour's time, left the milliner's, took a hackney-coach and drove to the "Green Man," where he was now sure of meeting his cousin.

"Thank Heaven! you are come at last," cried Marvel, the moment he saw him. "Thank Heaven! you are come; do not let us lose a moment. If you are not tired, if you are not hungry, come along with me, and I'll introduce you to my charming Alicia Barton."

"I am both tired and hungry," replied Wright; "so let us have a hot beef-steak, and let me sit down and rest myself."

It was the utmost stretch of Marvel's patience to wait for the beef-steak; and he could scarcely conceive how any one could prefer eating it to seeing his charming Alicia. He did not eat a morsel himself, but walked up and down the room with quick steps.

"Oh, my dear Wright," cried he, "it is a sign you've never seen her, or you would eat a little faster."

"Did everybody eat fast who has seen Miss Barton," said Wright, "then to be sure I should, for I have seen her within this half-hour."

"Seen her! Seen Alicia! Seen her within this half-hour! That's impossible. How could you see her? Where could you see her?"

"I saw her in your company," rejoined Wright, coolly.

"In my company! How could that be without my seeing you? You are making a jest of me."

"Not at all; only take care that you do not make a jest of yourself. I assure you that I say nothing but truth; I've seen

what you said to her—you told her that you could not sell Cloverhill till I came to town."

Marvel stared, and stood in silent astonishment.

"Ay," continued Wright, "you see by this how many things may pass before a man's eyes and ears, when he's in love, without his seeing or hearing them. Why, man, I was in the milliner's shop just now, standing in the corner behind the door; but you could see nothing but your charming Miss Barton."

"I beg your pardon for being so blind," said Marvel, laughing; "but you are too good-natured to take offence, though you don't know what it is to be in love."

"There you are mistaken; for I am as much in love as yourself at this instant."

"Then I'm undone," cried Marvel, turning as pale as death.

"Why so?" said Wright; "will you allow nobody, man, to be in love but yourself? I don't see why I have not as good a right to fall in love as you have."

"To be sure you have," said Marvel, trying to recover himself; "and I can't say but what you deal fairly by me, to tell me so honestly at once. More fool I to send for you. I might have foreseen this, blockhead as I am! but you deal fairly by me, Wright, so I cannot complain, and will not, happen what may. Let him who can win her wear her. We start fair; for though I have had the advantage of a first acquaintance, you are much the handsomer man of the two, and that goes for a great deal with some ladies, though not perhaps with Alicia Barton."

"There, perhaps, you may find yourself mistaken," replied Wright, with a significant look.

"You don't say so! You don't think so?" cried Marvel, with great emotion.

"I say what I think; and, if I may trust a woman's look, I've some reason for my thoughts."

Marvel took up the tankard which stood on the table, and swallowed down a hasty draught, and then said, though with an altered voice,—

"Cousin Wright, let him who can win her wear her, as I said before. I sha'n't quarrel with you if you deal fairly by me; so tell me, honestly, did you never see her before this morning?"

"Never, as I am an honest man," said Wright, laying his hand upon his heart.

"Then, here's my hand for you," said Marvel. "All's fair and handsome on your part; happen what may, as I have said before, I will not quarrel with you. If she was decreed to fall in love

with you at first sight, why that's no fault of yours ; and if she tells me so fairly, why no great fault of hers. She has encouraged me a little, but still women will change their minds, and I shall not call her a jilt if she speaks handsomely to me. It will go a little to my heart at first, no doubt, but I shall bear it like a man, I hope, and I shall not quarrel with you, Cousin Wright, whatever else I do."

Marvel shook Wright's hand heartily, but turned away directly afterwards, to hide his agitation.

"Why now, Cousin Marvel, you are a good fellow, that's the truth of it," said Wright. "Trust to me, and if the girl is what you think her, you shall have her, that I promise you."

"That's more than you *can* promise, being, as you say, as much in love as I am."

"I say I'm more in love than you are ; but what then ? I ask you."

"What then ! why, we cannot both have Alicia Barton."

"Very true," said Wright ; "I would not have her if you would give her to me."

"Would not have her !" cried Marvel, with a look of joyous astonishment ; "but did not you tell me you were in love with her ?"

"Not I. You told it to yourself. I said I was in love ; but cannot a man be in love with any woman in this whole world but Miss Barton ?"

Marvel capered about the room with the most lively expressions of delight, shook hands with his cousin as if he would have pulled his arm off, and then, suddenly stopping, said,—

"But what do you think of my Alicia ? Though you are not in love with her, I hope you think well of her."

"I must see more of her before I am qualified to speak."

"Nay, nay, no drawbacks : out with it. I must know what you think of her at this time being."

"At this time being, then, I think she is what they call a—coquette."

"Oh, there you are out, indeed, Cousin Wright ; she's more of what they call a prude than a coquette."

"To you, perhaps, but not to me, cousin. Let every one speak of her as they find," replied Wright.

Marvel grew warm in defence of Miss Barton's prudery, and at last ended by saying, "that he'd stake his life upon it, she was no jilt. If she had taken a fancy to you, Wright, she would honestly tell me so, I'm convinced ; and when she finds

you are thinking of another woman her pride would soon make her think no more of you. 'Tis but little she could have thought in the few minutes you were in her company, and it is my opinion she never thought of you at all. No offence."

"No offence, I promise you," said Wright; "but let us put her to the trial; do you keep your own counsel, go on courting her your own way, let me go mine. Don't you say one word of my being here in York, but put her off about the sale of Clover-hill till such time as you are sure of her heart."

To this proposal Marvel joyfully agreed; and, as to the time of trial, Wright asked only one week. His cousin then told him the new scheme, from which he expected to make so much; it had been suggested by Alicia's brother. "I am to sell Clover-hill, and with the money that I get for it Barton and I are to build and fit up a theatre in Lincoln, and be the managers ourselves. I assure you, he says, and they all say, I should make a figure on the stage; and Miss Barton whispered, in my hearing, that I should make a capital Lothario," added Marvel, throwing himself into a stage attitude, and reciting, in a voice that made Wright start,—

"Earth, heaven, and fair Calista, judge the combat."

"Very fine, no doubt," said Wright; "but I am no judge of these matters; only this I am sure of, that with respect to selling Clover-hill, you had best go slowly to work, and see what the sister is before you trust to the brother. It is not for my interest, I very well know, to advise you against this scheme; because, if I wanted to make certain of your not coming in for my uncle's legacy, I could not take a better way than to urge you to follow your fancy. For say that you lay out all you have in the world on the building of this playhouse, and say that Barton's as honest a man as yourself—observe, your playhouse cannot be built in less than a couple of years, and the interest of your money must be dead all that time, and pray how are you to bring yourself up by the end of the ten years? Consider, there are but seven years of the time to come."

Marvel gave his cousin hearty thanks for his disinterested advice, but observed that actors and managers of playhouses were, of all men, they who were most likely to grow rich in a trice; that they often cleared many hundreds in one night for their benefits; that even if he should fail to hit the public taste himself as an actor, he was sure, at least, if he married the charming Alicia, that she would be a source of inexhaustible

wealth. "Not," added he, "that I think of her in that light, for my soul is as much superior to mercenary considerations as her own."

"More, perhaps," said Wright; but seeing fire flash in his cousin's eyes at this insinuation, he contented himself for the present with the promise he had obtained, that nothing should be concluded till the end of one week; that no mention should be made to Miss Barton or her brother of his arrival in town; and that he should have free liberty to make trial of the lady's truth and constancy in any way he should think proper. Back to his friend, the milliner's, he posted directly. Miss Barton was gone out upon the race-ground in Captain Mowbray's curriole. In her absence Wright was received very graciously by the milliner, who had lodgings to let, and who readily agreed to let them to him for a week, as he offered half a guinea more than she could get from anybody else. She fancied that he was deeply smitten with Miss Barton's charms, and encouraged his passion by pretty broad hints that it was reciprocal. Miss Barton drank tea this evening with the milliner. Wright was of the party; and he was made to understand that *others* had been excluded, "for Miss Barton," her friend observed, "was very *nice* as to her company."

Many dexterous efforts were made to induce Wright to lay open his heart; for the dyer's lady had been cross-questioned as to his property in Lincolnshire; and she, being a lover of the marvellous, had indulged herself in a little exaggeration, so that he was considered a prize; and Miss Barton's imagination settled the matter so rapidly, that she had actually agreed to make the milliner a handsome present on the wedding-day. Upon this hint, the milliner became anxious to push forward the affair. Marvel, she observed, hung back about the sale of his estate; and as to Sir Plantagenet Mowbray's son, he was bound hand and foot by his father, so could do nothing genteel; besides, honourable matrimony was out of the question in that quarter.

All these things considered, the milliner's decision was, on perfectly prudential and virtuous motives, in favour of Wright. Miss Barton's *heart*, to use her own misapplied term, spoke warmly in his favour, for he was, without any comparison, the *handsomest* of her lovers; and his simplicity and apparent ignorance of the world were rather recommendations than objections.

Upon her second interview with him, she had, however, some

reason to suspect that his simplicity was not so great as she had imagined. She was surprised to observe that, notwithstanding all their artful hints, Wright came to nothing like a positive proposal, nor even to any declaration of his passion. The next day she was yet more astonished, for Wright, though he *knew* she was a full hour in the milliner's shop, never made the slightest attempt to see her; nay, in the evening he met her on the public walk, and passed without more notice than a formal bow, and without turning his head back to look after her, though she was flirting with a party of gentlemen, expressly for the purpose of exciting his jealousy.

Another consultation was held with her friend, the milliner.

"These men are terrible creatures to deal with," said her confidant. "Do you know, my dear creature, this man, simple as he looks, has been very near taking us in. Would you believe it? he is absolutely courting a Lincolnshire lady for a wife. He wrote a letter to her, my dear Alicia, this morning, and begged me to let my boy run with it to the post-office. I winded and winded, saying he was mighty anxious about the letter, and so on, till at the last out comes the truth. Then I touched him about you; but he said 'An actress was not fit for a farmer's wife, and that you had too many admirers already.' You see, my dear creature, that he has none of the thoughts we built upon. Depend upon it, he is a shrewd man, and knows what he is about: so, as we cannot do better than Marvel, my advice——"

"Your advice!" interrupted Miss Barton. "I shall follow no advice but my own." She walked up and down the small parlour in great agitation.

"Do as you please, my dear; but remember I cannot afford to *lay* out my money to all eternity. The account between us has run up to a great sum: the dresses were such as never were made up before in York, and must be paid for accordingly, as you must be sensible, Miss Barton. And when you have an opportunity of establishing yourself so handsomely, and getting all your debts paid; and when your brother, who was here an hour ago, presses the match with Mr. Marvel so much, it is very strange and unaccountable of you to say 'you will take nobody's advice but your own;' and to fall in love, ma'am, as you are doing, as fast as you can, with a person who has no serious intentions, and is going to be married to another woman. For shame, Miss Barton: is this behaving with proper propriety? Besides, I've really a great regard for that poor young man that

you have been making a fool of. I'm sure he is desperately in love with you."

"Then let him show it, and sell Clover-hill," said Miss Barton. Her mind balanced betwixt avarice and what she called love. She had taken a fancy to Wright; and his present coldness rather increased than diminished her passion: he played his part so well, that she could not tell how to decide. In the mean time, the milliner pressed for her money; and Alicia's brother bullied loudly in favour of Marvel. He had engaged the milliner, whom he was courting, to support his opinion. Marvel, though with much difficulty, stood his ground, and refused to sell Clover-hill till he should be perfectly sure that Miss Barton would marry him, and till his relation should arrive in town, and give his consent.

CHAPTER VI.

The Contentions of Selfishness and Vanity are often fatal to both.

MR. BARTON and the milliner now agreed that if fair means would not bring the charming Alicia to reason, others must be used; and it was settled that she should be arrested for her debt to the milliner, which was upwards of fifty pounds. "She knows," said this considerate brother, "that I have neither the power nor the will to pay the money. Sir Plantagenet's son is as poor as Job, so she must have recourse to Marvel; and if she gives him proper encouragement, he'll pay the money in a trice. As to this man who lodges with you, let her apply to him if she likes it: she will soon see how he will answer her. By your account, he is a shrewd fellow, and not like our friend Marvel."

On Friday morning the charming Alicia was arrested, at the suit of her dear friend and confidant, the milliner. The arrest was made in the milliner's shop. Alicia would doubtless have screamed and fainted, with very becoming spirit and grace, if any spectators had been present; but there was no one in the shop to admire or pity. She rushed with dishevelled hair, and all the stage show of distraction, into Wright's apartment; but, alas! he was not to be found. She then composed herself, and wrote the following note to Marvel:—

"To J. MARVEL, ESQ., &c.,

"At the 'Green Man,'

"Much as it hurts the delicacy and wounds the pride of Alicia, she is compelled, by the perfidy of a bosom friend of her own sex, to apply for

assistance and protection to one who will feel for the indignity that has been shown her. How will his generous nature shudder when he hears that she is on the point of being dragged to a leathsome dungeon, for want of the paltry sum of fifty pounds! Retrospection may convince the man of her heart that her soul is superior to mercenary considerations, else she would not now be reduced so low in the power of her enemies. She scarcely knows what she writes: her heart bleeds—her brain is on fire!

‘Celestial sounds! Peace dawns upon my soul,
And every pain grows less. Oh! gentle Altamont,
Think not too hardly of me when I’m gone,
But pity me. Had I but early known
Thy wondrous worth, thou excellent young man,
We had been happier both. Now ’tis too late.
And yet my eyes take pleasure to behold thee!
Thou art their last dear object. Mercy, Heaven!’

“Your unfortunate,

“And (shall I confess it?)

“Too affectionate, ALICIA.”

Marvel was settling some accounts with Wright when this note was put into his hands. Scarcely had he glanced his eye over it, when he started up, seized a parcel of bank-notes which lay on the table, and was rushing out of the room. Wright caught hold of his arm, and stopped him by force.

“Where now? What now, Marvel?” said he.

“Do not stop me, Wright! I will not be stopped! She has been barbarously used. They are dragging her to prison. They have driven her almost out of her senses. I must go to her this instant.”

“Well, well, don’t go without your hat, man; for the people in the street will take you for a lunatic. May a friend see this letter, that has driven *you* out of your senses?”

Marvel put it into Wright’s hands, who read it with wonderful composure; and, when he came to the end of it, only said—

“Hum!”

“Hum,” repeated Marvel, provoked beyond measure: “you have no humanity. You are most strangely prejudiced. You are worse than Goodenough. Why do you follow me?” continued he; observing that Wright was coming after him, across the inn-yard into the street.

“I follow you to take care of you,” said Wright, calmly: “and though you do stride on at such a rate, I’ll be bound to keep up with you.”

He suffered Marvel to walk on his own pace for the length of two streets, without saying another word; but, just as they were turning the corner into the square where the milliner lived, he again caught hold of his cousin’s arm, and said to him:—

"Hark you, Marvel, will you trust me with those bank-notes you have in your pocket; and will you let me step on to the milliner's and settle this business for you. I see it will cost you fifty pounds, but that I cannot help. You may think yourself well off."

"Fifty pounds! What are fifty pounds?" cried Marvel, hurrying forward. "You see that my Alicia must be superior to mercenary considerations; for though she knows I have a good fortune, that could not decide her in my favour."

"No, because she fancies that I have a better fortune; and besides (for there are times when a man must speak plainly), I've a notion she would at this minute sooner be my mistress than your wife, if the thing were fairly tried. She'll take your money as fast as you please; and I may take her as fast as I please."

Incensed at these words, Marvel could scarcely restrain his passion within bounds; but Wright, without being moved, continued to speak.

"Nay, then, cousin, if you don't believe me, put it to the test! I'll wait here, at this woollen-draper's, where I am to dine: do you go on to your milliner's, and say what you please, only let me have my turn for half an hour this evening; and if I am mistaken in the lady, I'll freely own it, and make all due apology."

Early in the morning, Marvel came to Wright with a face full of joy and triumph. "Go to my Alicia now, Cousin Wright," said he, "I defy you. She is at her lodging.—She has promised to marry me! I am the happiest man in the world!"

Wright said not a word, but departed. Now he had in his pocket an unanswered billet-doux, which had been laid upon his table the preceding night; the billet-doux had no name to it; but, from all he had remarked of the lady's manners towards him, he could not doubt that it was the charming Alicia's. He was determined to have positive proof, however, to satisfy Marvel's mind completely. The note which he had received was as follows:—

"What can be the cause of your cruel and sudden change, towards one of whom you lately appeared to think so partially? A certain female friend may deceive you, by false representations: do not trust to her, but learn the real sentiments of a fond heart from one who knows not how to feign. Spare the delicacy of your victim, and guess her name."

To this note, from one "who knew not how to feign," Wright sent the following reply:—

"If Miss Barton knows anything of a letter, that was left at Mrs. Stokes's, the milliner's, last night, she may receive an answer to her questions from the bearer; who, being no scholar, hopes she will not take offence at the shortness of these lines, but satisfy him with the honour of drinking tea with her, who waits below stairs for an answer."

The charming Alicia allowed him the honour of drinking tea with her; and was delighted with the thoughts that she had at last caught him in her snares. The moment she had hopes of him, she resolved to break her promise to Marvel; and by making a merit of sacrificing to Wright all his rivals, she had no doubt that she should work so successfully upon his vanity as to induce him to break off his treaty with the Lincolnshire lady.

Wright quietly let her go on with the notion that she had the game in her own hands; at length he assumed a very serious look, like one upon the point of forming some grand resolution; and turning half away from her, said:—

"But now, look ye, Miss Barton; I am not a sort of man who would like to be made a fool of. Here I am told half the gentlemen of York are dying for you; and as your friend Mrs. Stokes informed——"

"Mrs. Stokes is not my friend, but the basest and most barbarous of enemies," cried Alicia.

"Why now, this is strange! She was your friend yesterday; and how do I know but a woman may change as quick, and as short about her lovers as about her friends."

"I can never change; fear nothing," said Alicia, tenderly.

"But let me finish what I was saying about Mrs. Stokes: she told me something about one Mr. Marvel, I think they call him. Now what is all that?"

"Nothing; he is a foolish young man, who was desperately in love with me, that's all, and offered to marry me; but as I told him, I am superior to mercenary considerations."

"And is the air broken off, then?" said Wright, looking her full in the face. "That's in one word what I must be sure of: for I am not a man that would choose to be jilted. Sit you down and pen me a farewell to that same foolish young fellow. I am a plain-spoken man, and now you have my mind."

Miss Barton was now persuaded that all Wright's coldness had proceeded from jealousy. Blinded by her passions, and alarmed by the idea that this was the moment in which she must either secure or for ever abandon Wright and his fortune,

she consented to his proposal, and wrote the following tender adieu to Marvel :—

“To J. MARVEL, ESQ., &c.

“At the ‘Green Man.’

“SIR.—Circumstances have occurred, since I had last the honour of seeing you, which make it impossible that I should ever think of you more.

“ALICIA BARTON.”

Wright said he was perfectly satisfied with this note ; and all that he now desired was to be himself the bearer of it to Marvel.

“He is a hot-headed young man,” said Alicia ; “he will perhaps quarrel with you : let me send the letter by a messenger of my own. You don’t know him ; you will not be able to find him out. Besides, why will you deprive me of your company ? Cannot another carry this note as well as you ?”

“None shall carry it but myself,” said Wright, holding fast his prize. She was apprehensive of losing him for ever, if she opposed what she thought his jealous humour ; so she struggled no longer to hold him, but bade him make haste to return to his Alicia.

He returned no more ; but the next morning she received from him the following note :—

To MISS ALICIA BARTON, &c., &c.

“MADAM,—Circumstances have occurred, since I had last the honour of seeing you, which make it impossible that I should ever think of you more.

“JOHN WRIGHT.

P.S.—My cousin Marvel thanks you for your note. Before you receive this, he will have left York wiser than he came into it by fifty guineas, and more.”

“Wiser by more than fifty guineas, I hope,” said Marvel, as he rode out of town, early in the morning. “I have been on the point of being finely taken in ! I’m sure this will be a lesson to me as long as I live. I shall never forget your good nature and steadiness to me, Wright. Now, if it had not been for you, I might have been married to this jade, and have given her and her brother everything I’m worth in the world. Well, well, this is a lesson I shall remember. I’ve felt it sharply enough. Now I’ll turn my head to my business again, if I can. How Good-enough would laugh at me, if he knew this story. But I’ll make up for all the foolish things I have done yet before I die ; and I hope, before I die, I may be able to show you, Cousin Wright, how much I am obliged to you : that would be greater

joy to me even than getting by my own ingenuity my uncle Pearson's ten thousand pounds legacy. Do, Wright, find out something I can do for you, to make amends for all the trouble I've given you, and all the time I have made you waste: do, there's a good fellow."

"Well, then," said Wright, "I don't want to saddle you with an obligation. You shall pay me in kind directly, since you are so desirous of it. I told you I was in love: you shall come with me and see my mistress, to give me your opinion of her. Every man can be prudent for his neighbour. Even you, no doubt, can," added Wright, laughing.

CHAPTER VII.

Self-satisfaction and the World's Applause are bestowed on suffering yet disinterested Virtue.

WRIGHT's mistress was a Miss Banks, the only daughter of a gentleman who had set up an apparatus for manufacturing woad.

Mr. Banks's house was in their way home, and they called there. They knocked several times at the door, before anyone answered. At last a boy came to hold their horses, who told them that Mr. Banks was dead, and that nobody could be let into the house. The boy knew nothing of the matter, except that his master died, he believed, of a sort of a fit; and that his young mistress was in great grief: "which I'm mortal sorry for," added he; "for she be's kind-hearted and civil spoken, and moreover did give me the very shoes I have on my feet."

"I wish I could see her," said Wright: "I might be some comfort to her."

"Might ye so, master? If that be so," said the boy, looking earnestly in Wright's face, "I'll do my best endeavours."

He ran off at full speed through the back yard, but returned to learn the gentleman's name, which he had forgotten to ask; and presently afterwards he brought his answer. It was written with pencil, and with a trembling hand.

"MY DEAR MR. WRIGHT,—I cannot see you now: but you shall hear from me as soon as I am able to give an answer to your last.

S. BANKS."

The words, "My dear," were half rubbed out; but they were visible enough to his eyes. Wright turned his horse's head homewards, and Marvel and he rode away. His heart was so

full that he could not speak, and he did not hear what Marvel said to comfort him. As they were thus riding on slowly they heard a great noise of horsemen behind them ; and, looking back, they saw a number of farmers, who were riding after them. As they drew near, Wright's attention was roused by hearing the name of *Banks* frequently repeated. "What news, neighbour?" said Marvel.

"The news is that Mr. Banks is dead: he died of an apoplectic fit, and has left his daughter a power o' money, they say. Happy the man who gets her! Good-morrow to you, gentlemen; we're in haste home."

After receiving this intelligence, Wright read his mistress's note over again, and observed that he was not quite pleased to see the words "My dear" half rubbed out. Marvel exclaimed, "Have nothing more to do with her; that's my advice to you: for I would not marry any woman for her fortune; especially if she thought she was doing me a favour. If she loved you, she would not have rubbed out those words at such a time as this."

"Stay a bit," said Wright; "we shall be better able to judge by-and-by."

A week passed away, and Wright heard nothing from Miss Banks; nor did he attempt to see her, but waited as patiently as he could for her promised letter. At last it came. The first word was, "Sir." That was enough for Marvel, who threw it down with indignation when his cousin showed it to him.

"Nay, but read it, at least," said Wright.

"SIR,—My poor father's affairs have been left in great disorder; and, instead of the fortune which you might have expected with me, I shall have little or nothing. The creditors have been very kind to me, and I hope in time to pay all just debts. I have been much hurried with business, or should have written sooner. Indeed, it is no pleasant task to me to write at all on this occasion. I cannot unsay what I have said to you in former times; for I think the same of you as ever I did: but I know that I am not now a fit match for you as to fortune, and would not hold any man to his word, nor could value any man enough to marry him, who would break it. Therefore it will be no grief for me to break off with you, if such should be your desire. And no blame shall be thrown upon you, by my friends; for I will take the refusal upon myself. I know the terms of your uncle's will, and the great reason you have to wish for a good fortune with your wife; so it is very natural—I mean very likely, you may not choose to be burthened with a woman who has none. Pray speak your mind freely to,

"Sir, your humble servant,

"S. BANKS."

Marvel had no sooner read this letter than he advised his friend Wright to marry Miss Banks directly.

"That is what I have determined to do," said Wright: "for I

don't think money the first thing in the world ; and I would sooner give up my uncle Pearson's legacy this minute than break my word to any woman, much less to one that I love, as I do Miss Banks better now than ever. I have just heard from the steward, who brought this letter, how handsomely and prudently she has behaved to other people, as well as to myself ; by which I can judge most safely. She has paid all the debts that were justly due ; and has sold even the gig, which I know she wished to keep : but, seeing that it was not suited to her present circumstances, her good sense has got the better. Now, to my mind, a prudent wife, even as to money matters, may turn out a greater treasure to a man than what they call a great fortune."

With these sentiments Wright married Miss Banks, who was indeed a very prudent, amiable girl. Goodenough sneered at this match ; and observed that he had always foretold Wright would be taken in, sooner or later. Goodenough was now in his thirty-second year ; and, as he had always determined to marry precisely at this age, he began to look about for a wife. He chose a widow, said to be of a very close, saving temper ; she was neither young, handsome, nor agreeable : but then she was rich ; and it was Goodenough's notion that the main chance should be first considered, in matrimony as in everything else. Now, this notable dame was precisely of his way of thinking ; but she had more shrewdness than her lover, and she over-reached him in the bargain : her fortune did not turn out to be above one half of what report had represented it ; her temper was worse than even her enemies said it was ; and the time that was daily wasted in trifling disputes, between this well-matched pair, was worth more than all the petty savings made by her avaricious habits.

Goodenough cursed himself ten times a day, during the honeymoon ; but, as he did not like to let the neighbours know how far he had been outwitted, he held his tongue with the fortitude of a martyr ; and his partisans all commended him for making so prudent a match.

"Ay, ay," said they : "there's Wright, who might have had this very woman, has gone and married a girl without a shilling with all his prudence ; and, as to Marvel, he will surely be bit." There they were mistaken. Marvel was a person capable of learning from experience ; and he never forgot the lesson that he had received from the charming Alicia. It seemed to have sobered him completely.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Pleasures of Folly too often become its Misfortunes.

ABOUT this time, Mr. James Harrison, an eminent dyer, uncle to Wright's friend of that name at York, came to settle near Clover-hill; and, as Marvel was always inclined to be hospitable, he assisted his new neighbour with many of those little conveniences which money cannot always command, at the moment they are wanted. The dyer was grateful; and, in return for Marvel's civilities, let Marvel into many of the mysteries of the dying business, which he was anxious to understand. Scarcely a day passed without his calling on Mr. James Harrison. Now, Mr. Harrison had a daughter Lucy, who was young and pretty; and Marvel thought her more and more agreeable every time he saw her; but, as he told Wright, he was determined not to fall in love with her, till he was quite sure that she was good for something. A few weeks after he had been acquainted with her, he had an opportunity of seeing her tried. Mrs. Isaac Harrison, the dyer of York's lady, came to spend a week with her at the Christmas holidays; Miss Melicent, or as she was commonly called Milly Harrison, accompanied her mother; she, having a more fashionable air than Lucy, and having learned to dance from a London dancing-master, thought herself so much her superior, that she ought to direct her in all things. Miss Milly, the Sunday after her arrival, appeared at church in a bonnet that charmed half the congregation; and a crowd of farmers' wives and daughters, the moment church was over, begged the favour of Miss Milly to tell them where and how such a bonnet could be got, and how much it would cost? It was extravagantly dear; and those mothers who had any prudence were frightened at the price; but the daughters were of opinion that it was the cheapest, as well as prettiest, thing that ever was seen or heard of; and Miss Milly was commissioned to write immediately to York, to bespeak fifteen bonnets exactly like her own. This transaction was settled before they had left the churchyard; and Miss Milly was leaning upon a tombstone, to write down the names of those who were most eager to have their bonnets before the next Sunday, when Wright and Marvel came up to the place where the crowd was gathered, and they saw what was going forward.

Miss Barber, Miss Cotton, Miss Lamb, Miss Dishly, Miss Trotter, Miss Hull, Miss Parker, Miss Burv, Miss Oxlev, &c.

&c. &c. &c. &c. &c. &c. &c. &c. &c. &c., each in their turn peeped anxiously over Miss Milly's shoulder, to make themselves sure that their names were in the happy list. Lucy Harrison, alone, stood with a composed countenance in the midst of the agitated group.

"Well, Cousin Lucy, what say you now? shall I bespeak a bonnet for you, eh? Do you know," cried Miss Milly, turning to the admirers of her bonnet—"do you know that I offered to bespeak one yesterday for Lucy; and she was so stingy, she would not let me, because it was *too dear*?"

"*Too dear*! Could you conceive it?" repeated the young ladies, joining in a scornful titter.

All eyes were now fixed upon Lucy, who blushed deeply, but answered, with gentle steadiness, that she really could not afford to lay out so much money upon a bonnet, and that she would rather not have her name put down in the list.

"She's a good, prudent girl," whispered Wright to Marvel.

"And very pretty, I am sure. I never saw her look so pretty as at this instant," replied Marvel, in a low voice.

"Please yourself, child," said Miss Milly, throwing back her head with much disdain; "but I'm sure you'll please nobody else with such a dowdy thing as that you have on. Lord! I should like to see her walk the streets of York, on a Sunday, that figure! Lord! how Mrs. Stokes would laugh!"

Here she paused! and several of her fair audience were struck with the terrible idea of being laughed at by a person whom they had never seen, and whom they were never likely to see, and transporting themselves in imagination into the streets of York, felt all the horror of being stared at, in an unfashionable bonnet, by Mrs. Stokes.

"Gracious me! Miss Milly, do pray be sure to have mine sent from York afore next Sunday," cried one of the country belles: "And, gracious me, don't forget mine, Miss Milly," was reiterated by every voice but Lucy's, as the crowd followed Miss Harrison out of the churchyard. Great was the contempt felt for her by the company; but she was proof against their ridicule, and calmly ended, as she began, with saying, "I cannot afford it."

"She is a prudent girl," repeated Wright in a low voice to Marvel.

"But I hope this not stinginess," whispered Marvel. "I would not marry such a stingy animal as Goodenough has taken to wife for all the world. Do you know, she has half-starved the servant-boy that lived with them. There he is, yonder,

getting over the stile. Did you ever see such a miserable-looking creature? He can tell you fifty stories of Dame Goodenough's stinginess. I would not marry a stingy woman for the whole world. I hope Lucy Harrison is not stingy."

"Pray, Mrs. Wright," said Marvel's friend, turning to his wife, who had been standing beside him, and who had not yet said one word, "what may your opinion be?"

"My opinion is, that she is as generous a girl as any upon earth," said Mrs. Wright; "and I have good reason to say so."

"How? What?" said Marvel, eagerly.

"Her father lent my poor father five hundred pounds; and at the meeting of the creditors after his death, Mr. Harrison was very earnest to have the money paid, because it was his daughter's fortune. When he found that it could not be had immediately, he grew extremely angry; but Lucy pacified him, and told him that she was sure I should pay the money honestly, as soon as I could, and that she would willingly wait to have it paid at a hundred pounds a year for my convenience. I am more obliged to her for the handsome way in which she trusted to me, than if she had given me half the money. I shall never forget it."

"I hope you forgive her for not buying the bonnet?" said Wright to Marvel.

"Forgive her! ay; now I love her for it," said Marvel; "now I know that she is not stingy."

From this day forward, Marvel's attachment to Lucy rapidly increased. One evening he was walking in the fields with Lucy and Miss Milly, who played off her finest York airs to attract his admiration, when the following dialogue passed between them:—

"La! Cousin Lucy," said Miss Melicent, "when shall we get you to York? I long to show you a little of the world, and to introduce you to my friend, Mrs. Stokes, the milliner."

"My father says that he does not wish that I should be acquainted with Mrs. Stokes," said Lucy.

"Your father! nonsense, child. Your father has lived all his life in the country, the Lord knows where: he has not lived in York, as I have; so how can he know anything upon earth of the world? What we call the world, I mean."

"I do not know, Cousin Milly, what you call the world; but I think that he knows more of Mrs. Stokes than I do; and I shall trust to his opinion, for I never knew him speak ill of anybody without having good reason for it. Besides, it is my duty to obey my father."

"Duty! La! gracious me! She talks as if she was a baby in

leading-strings," cried Miss Milly, laughing; but she was mortified at observing that Marvel did not join, as she had expected, in the laugh: so she added, in a scornful tone, "Perhaps I'm in the wrong box, and that Mr. Marvel is one of those who admire pretty babies in leading-strings."

"I am one of those that admire a good daughter, I confess," said Marvel; "and," said he, lowering his voice, "that love her too."

Miss Milly coloured with anger, and Lucy with an emotion that she had never felt before. As they returned home, they met Mr. Harrison; and the moment Marvel espied him he quitted the ladies.

"I've something to say to you, Mr. Harrison. I should be glad to speak a few words to you in private, if you please," cried he, seizing his arm and leading him down a bye lane.

Mr. Harrison was all attention; but Marvel began to gather primroses, instead of speaking.

"Well," said Mr. Harrison, "did you bring me here to see you gather primroses?"

After smelling the flowers twenty times, and placing them in twenty different forms, Marvel at last threw them on the bank, and with a sudden effort exclaimed,—

"You have a daughter, Mr. James Harrison."

"I know I have; and I thank God for it."

"So you have reason to do; for a more lovely girl, and a better, in my opinion, never existed."

"One must not praise one's own, or I should agree with you," said the proud father.

Again there was silence; and again Marvel picked up his primroses.

"In short," said he, "Mr. Harrison, would you like me for a son-in law?"

"Would Lucy like you for a husband? I must know that first," said the good father.

"That is what I do not know," replied Marvel; "but if I was to ask her, she would ask you, I am sure, whether you would like me for a son-in-law."

"At this rate we shall never get forwards," said Harrison. "Go you back to Miss Milly, and send my Lucy here to me."

We shall not tell how Lucy picked up the flowers, which had been her lover's grand resource; nor how often she blushed upon the occasion. She acknowledged that she thought Mr. Marvel *very agreeable*, but that she was afraid to marry a person who

had so little steadiness; that she had heard of a great number of schemes undertaken by him which had failed, or which he had given up as hastily as he had begun them. "Besides," said she, "maybe he might change his mind about me, as well as about other things; for I've heard from my cousin Milly—I've heard—that—he was in love, not very long since, with an actress in York. Do you think this is all true?"

"Yes, I know it is all true," said Mr. Harrison, "for he told me so himself. He is an honest, open-hearted young man; but I think as you do, child—that we cannot be sure of his steadiness."

When Marvel heard from Mr. Harrison the result of this conversation, he was inspired with the strongest desire to convince Lucy that he was capable of perseverance. To the astonishment of all who knew him,—or who thought that they knew him,—he settled steadily to business, and for a whole twelvemonth no one heard him speak of any new scheme. At the end of this time he renewed his proposal to Lucy, saying that he hoped she would now have some dependence upon his constancy to her, since she had seen the power she had over his mind. Lucy was artless and affectionate, as well as prudent. Now that her only real objection to the match was lessened, she did not torment him to try her power, but acknowledged her attachment to him, and they were married.

Sir Plantagenet Mowbray's agent was much astonished that Lucy did not prefer him, because he was a richer man than Pierce Marvel; and Miss Milly Harrison was also astonished that Mr. Marvel did not prefer her to such a country girl as Lucy, especially when she had a thousand pounds more to her fortune. But, notwithstanding all this astonishment, Marvel and his wife were perfectly happy.

CHAPTER IX.

By a Combination of Virtues Men become successful.

It was now the fifth year after old Mr. Pearson's death. Wright was at this time the richest of the three nephews, for the money that he had laid out in draining Holland Fen began to bring him in twenty per cent. As to Marvel, he had exchanged some of his finest acres for the warren of silver-sprigs, the common full of thistles, and the marsh full of reeds. He had lost

many guineas by his sheep and their jackets, and many more by his ill-fenced plantations; so that, counting all the losses from the failure of his schemes and the waste of his time, he was a thousand pounds poorer than when he first came into possession of Clover-hill.

Goodenough was not, according to the most accurate calculations, one shilling richer or poorer than when he first began the world. "Slow and sure," said his friends: "fair and softly goes far in a day. What he has, he'll hold fast: that's more than Marvel ever did, and may be more than Wright will do in the end. He dabbles a little in *experiments*, as he calls them; this he has learned from his friend Marvel; and this will come to no good."

About this time there was some appearance of a scarcity in England, and many farmers set an unusual quantity of potatoes, in hopes that they would bear a high price the ensuing season. Goodenough, who feared and hated everything that was called a speculation, declared that, for his part, he would not set a ridge more than he used to do. What had always done for him and his, should do for him still. With this resolution, he began to set his potatoes. Marvel said to him, whilst he was at work,—"Cousin Goodenough, I would advise you not to set the shoots that are at the bottom of these potatoes; for if you do, they won't be good for anything. This is a secret I learned last harvest-home from one of my Irish haymakers. I tried the experiment upon a few ridges last year, and found the poor fellow was quite right. I have given him a guinea for his information; and it will be worth a great deal more to me and my neighbours."

"May be so," said Goodenough; "but I shall set my own potatoes my own way, I thank you, Cousin Marvel; for I take it the old way's best, and I'll never follow any other."

Marvel saw that it was in vain to attempt to convince Goodenough; therefore he left him to his old ways. The consequence was, that Goodenough and his family ate the worst potatoes in the whole country this year; and Marvel cleared *above two hundred* pounds by twenty acres of potatoes, set according to his friend the Irishman's directions.

This was the first speculation of Marvel's which succeeded; because it was the first which had been begun with prudence, and pursued with steadiness. His information in the first instance was good; it came from a person who had actually tried the experiment, and who had seen it tried by others; and

when he was convinced of the fact, he applied his knowledge at the proper time, boldly extended his experiment, and succeeded. This success raised him in the opinion even of his enemies. His friend Wright heartily rejoiced at it; but Goodenough sneered, and said to Wright, "What Marvel has gained this year he'll lose by some scheme the next. I dare to say, now, he has some new scheme or another brewing in his brains at this very moment. Ay—Look, here he comes, with two bits of rags in his hand. Now for it!"

Marvel came up to them with great eagerness in his looks; and showing two freshly-dyed patterns of cloth, said, "Which of these two blues is the brightest?"

"That in your left hand," said Wright, "it is a beautiful blue."

Marvel rubbed his hands with an air of triumph; but restraining his joy, he addressed himself to Wright in a composed voice.

"My dear Wright, I have many obligations to you; and if I have any good fortune, you shall be the first to share it with me. As for you, Cousin Goodenough, I don't bear malice against you for laughing at me and my heron's feathers, and my silver-sprigs, and my sheep's jacket, and my thistles; shake hands, man; you shall have a share in our scheme if you please."

"I don't please to have any share at all in any of your schemes, Cousin Marvel; I thank you kindly," said Goodenough.

"Had not you better hear what it is before you decide against it?" said Wright.

Marvel explained himself further. "Some time ago," said he, "I was with my father-in-law, who was dyeing some cloth with woad. I observed that one corner of the cloth was of a much brighter blue than any of the rest; and upon examining what could be the cause of this, I found that the corner of the cloth had fallen upon the ground, as it was taken out of the dyeing-vat, and had trailed through a mixture of colours, which I had accidentally spilled on the floor. I carefully recollected of what this mixture was composed; I found that woad was the principal ingredient; the other—is a secret. I have repeated my experiments several times, and I find that they have always succeeded; I was determined not to speak of my discovery till I was sure of the facts. Now I am sure of them. My father-in-law tells me that he and his brother at York could insure to me

an advantageous sale for as much blue cloth as I can prepare; and he advises me to take out a patent for the dye."

Goodenough had not patience to listen any longer, but exclaimed :—

"Join in a patent; that's more than I would do, I am sure, Cousin Marvel; so don't think to take me in. I'll end as I begun, without having anything to do with any of your new-fangled schemes—Good morning to you."

"I hope, Wright," said Marvel, proudly, "that you do not suspect me of any design to take you in; and that you will have some confidence in this scheme, when you find that my experiments have been accurately tried."

Wright assured Marvel that he had the utmost confidence in his integrity: and that he would carefully go over with him any experiments he chose to show him. "I do not want to worm your secret from you," said he: "but we must make ourselves sure of success before we go to take out a patent, which will be an expensive business."

"You are exactly the sort of man I should wish to have for my partner," cried Marvel, "for you have all the coolness and prudence that I want."

"And you have all the quickness and ingenuity that I want," replied Wright; "so between us, we should indeed, as you say, make good partners."

A partnership was soon established between Wright and Marvel. The wood apparatus, which belonged to Wright's father-in-law, was given up to the creditors to pay the debts; but none of these creditors understood the management of it, or were willing to engage in it, lest they should ruin themselves. Marvel prevailed upon Wright to keep it in his own hands; and the creditors, who had been well satisfied by his wife's conduct towards them, and who had great confidence in his character for prudence, relinquished their claims upon the property, and trusted to Wright's promise, that they should be gradually paid by instalments.

"See what it is to have chosen a good wife," said Wright. "Good character is often better than good fortune."

The wife returned the husband's compliment: but we must pass over such unfashionable conversation, and proceed with our story.

The reader may recollect our mentioning a little boy who carried a message from Wright to his mistress, the day that he called upon her, on his return from York. She had been very good to this boy, and he was of a grateful temper. After he left

her father's service, he was hired by a gentleman, who lived near Spalding, and for some time she had heard nothing of him: but about a year after she was married, his master paid a visit in Lincolnshire, and the lad early one morning came to see his "*old young mistress*." He came so very early that none of the family were stirring, except Marvel, who had risen by daybreak to finish some repairs that he was making in the woad apparatus. He recognised the boy the moment he saw him, and welcomed him with his usual good-nature.

"Ah, sir!" said the lad, "I be's glad to see things going on here again. I be's main glad to hear how young mistress is happy! But I must be back afore my own present master be's up? so will you be pleased to give my sarvice and duty, and here's a little sort of a tea-chest for her, that I made with the help of a fellow servant of mine. If so be she'll think well of taking it, I should be very proud: it has a lock and key and all."

Marvel was astonished at the workmanship of this tea-chest; and when he expressed his admiration, the boy said: "Oh, sir! all the difficultest parts were done by my fellow-servant; who is more handy like than I am, ten to one, though he's a Frenchman. He was one of them French prisoners, and he is a curious man. He would have liked of all things to have come here along with me this morning, to get a sight of what's going on here; because that they have woad-mills and the like in his own country, he says: but then he would not come spying without leave, being a civil, honest man."

Marvel told the boy that his fellow-servant should be heartily welcome to satisfy his curiosity; and the next morning the Frenchman came. He was a native of Languedoc, where woad is cultivated; he had been engaged in the manufacture of it, and Marvel soon found, by his conversation, that he was a well-informed intelligent man. He told Marvel that there were many natives of Languedoc, at this time prisoners in England, who understood the business as well as he did, and would be glad to be employed, or to sell their knowledge at a reasonable price. Marvel was not too proud to learn, even from a Frenchman. With Wright's consent, he employed several of these workmen; and he carried, by their means, the manufacture of woad to a high pitch of perfection. How success changes the opinion of men! The Lincolnshire farmers, who had formerly sneered at Marvel as a genius and a projector, began to look up to him as to a very wise and knowing man, when they saw this manufacture continue to thrive; and those who had blamed Wright for

entering into partnership with him, now changed their minds. Marvel was taught perseverance by Wright, and Wright was excited to activity by Marvel. Neither of them could have done separately what they both effected by their union.

At the end of the ten years Goodenough was precisely where he was when he began—neither richer nor poorer, neither wiser nor happier; all that he had added to his stock was a cross wife and two cross children. He, to the very last moment, persisted in the belief that he should be the richest of the three, and that Wright and Marvel would finish by being bankrupts. He was in unutterable astonishment, when, upon the appointed day, they produced their account-books, to Mr. Constantine, the executor, and it was found that they were many thousand pounds better in the world than himself.

"Now, gentlemen," said Mr. Constantine, "to which of you am I to give your uncle's legacy? I must know which of the partners has the greatest share in the manufactory."

"Wright has the greatest share," cried Marvel; "for without his prudence, I should have been ruined."

"Marvel has the greatest share," cried Wright; "for without his ingenuity I should never have succeeded in the business, nor indeed should I have undertaken it."

"Then, gentlemen, you must divide the ten thousand pounds between you," said Mr. Constantine, "and I give you joy of your happy partnership. What can be more advantageous than a partnership between prudence and justice on the one side, and generosity and abilities on the other."

